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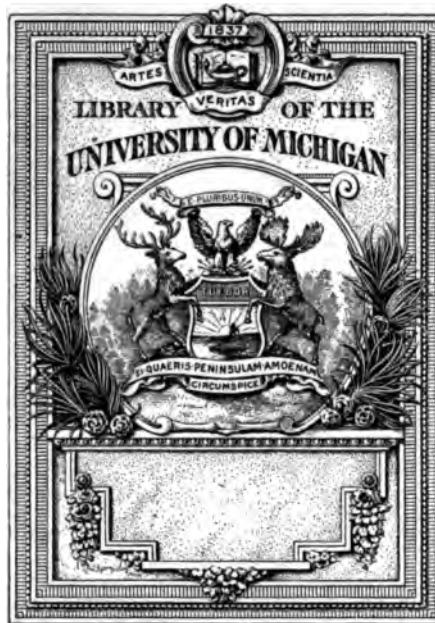
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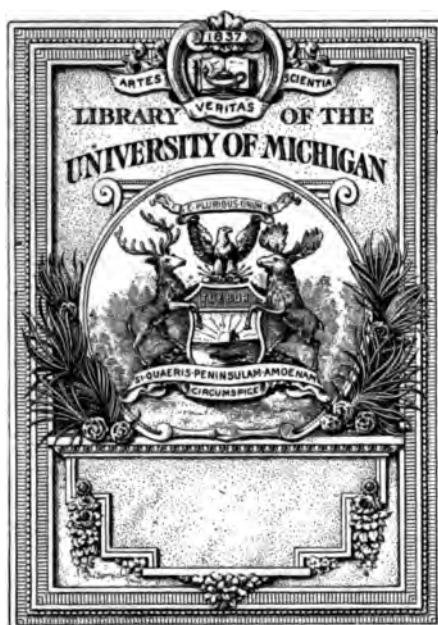
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SIGISMONDO
MALATESTA





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MALATESTA · LORD OF RIMINI**

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Sigismondo. Malatesta.
after a medal by Pisanello in the British Museum

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SIGISMONDO PANDOLFO MALATESTA · LORD OF RIMINI

A STUDY OF A XV CENTURY
ITALIAN DESPOT

BY
EDWARD HUTTON



WITH TEN
ILLUSTRATIONS
IN PHOTOGRAVURE

LONDON : J. M. DENT & CO. BEDFORD ST. W.C.
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TO MY FRIEND
ARTHUR SYMONS
WITH AFFECTIONATE HOMAGE
I DEDICATE
MY INTENTION IN THIS
BOOK.

CORBIGNANO, *August* 1906

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THE MEMOIRS
OF THE MOST
MATERIAL TRANSACTIONS
IN
THE LIFE OF
SIGISMONDO PANDOLFO MALATESTA
LORD OF RIMINI

WRITTEN IN TUSCAN

By PIETRO SANSEVERINO

WITH A SKETCH OF HIS OWN LIFE-AND AN ACCOUNT
OF HIS MEETING WITH

LEON BATTISTA ALBERTI

MCCCCLXXXI



SIGISMONDO MALATESTA

I

OFTEN have I considered with myself how and in what manner I should write down my remembrance of Signor Sigismondo Malatesta and the meditations of my heart; whether, greatly daring, I should imitate Cæsar in his Commentaries, or follow a long way off the immortal and almost heavenly page of Cicero; but when I remember that Messer Gaspare Broglio, having suffered all the campaigns of Sigismondo, has written of them tirelessly, omitting nothing, and that young Messer Basinio of Parma, lately dead in Rimini, has already sung of him as Virgil sang of Æneas, there seems to me to be no room for any further eloquence, and I think that I am the last man to fill my mouth with an old music. Therefore, seeing that already the whole of Italy is full of his glory, a more humble way, a kind of by-path in history as it were, seems to be permitted me, and will suit me best, where quietly and without the necessity of filling an eloquent period with words, I may speak of him I have loved, really to myself as one might say, and meditate a little as I write of him and of Italy.

And if, as certain of the Pedants pretend, it is necessary that all our modern ways, in art at any rate, ought to be modelled on the ancients, I too may claim my master, as well as Messer Gaspare or Messer Basinio; for it was somewhat in the fashion I have proposed to myself, a little formless perhaps, recording rather thoughts than facts, wholly medita-

tive and concerned with everyday things, that Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the Emperor, wrote long ago his own book, which has lately recaptured the world. But there again I must excuse myself, for Aurelius being a Roman yet wrote in Greek; while I who have spoken with Gemisthus Pletho and wandered so far as Byzantium, and met,—ah! in my youth,—Messer Carlo Marsupini in argument, he who knew Latin as his own language, shall yet content myself with writing in the vulgar tongue, which seems to me gentler and sweeter and certainly more in touch with our life than those old proud languages. For I am not in agreement with Messer Poggio Bracciolini, who is sorry that Dante Alighieri did not write his *Commedia* in Latin; though indeed, as it is said, he tried to do so, but found it, perhaps as I have done, too full of old thoughts. Yet indeed it is only with a certain hesitation and care that I may speak the Tuscan tongue; for I confess it at once I am of Naples, from the village of San Severino, where they only speak their own language. And therefore it has cost me a pang not to write in Latin, for in Tuscan I have no style; I do not write like a Florentine, but, I fear, like a barbarian. And though for my thoughts, which after all I can but suggest, and, now I come to think it over, few are likely to read, any style might seem good enough, I should wish to say what I have to say in no unworthy manner, devoid of beauty, but with a certain orderliness and simplicity.

Here, in the beautiful gardens of Signor Lorenzo's Villa at Fiesole, I shall have time to turn over the leaves of my diaries, and to put my thoughts in order, in the long days when I am not with his children, or in the twilight when I do not walk with him or Messer Poliziano. For, strangely enough as it seems to me after my unrestful life, I am to spend my old age in this quiet garden, looking across the meadows to

Florence and the hills of San Miniato, or in the winter-time in the great library of the Palace, copying Greek or turning the beautiful pages of the manuscripts. And even as I seem to have walked into this garden just by chance, so it was chance too brought me to Rimini and, as it seems, decided my life for me. For I was born in the little village of San Severino, in the kingdom of Naples; and my parents were poor, but of good family. Such wisdom as was to be had in such a place, not without pains, they bought for me, Pietro, their only son. And as it happened, this foolish wisdom, dearly bought, undid all my youth; and by no fault of theirs, for they were simple people, and loved me well. It happened thus: a day's journey from our home, in a tower on a round hill between the valley and the sea, an Astrologer lived, whose name I think I never knew; he was much sought after by the people of the city. My father, wishing to do well by me, bade him cast my horoscope, for the which he paid him three gold Ducats.

It was this horoscope that spoiled my childhood, and by the manifold mercy of God, using an art rather beautiful than useful, sent me out into the world at fifteen years old, for my good, as I cannot but think, when I remember Sigismondo and look on the books beside me, yes, and the cypress yonder against that grove of olives. For he who cast my horoscope said I should die "hand-in-hand with youth"; and from that day my mother continually expected my death. It found me not; but I, weary at last of her sadness and the watchful eyes of my father, set out to find life, half understanding that he who will save his life must lose it. So I fixed my gaze on the centre of the world, and came on foot to Rome. There I learned Latin in the train of Cardinal Palla, who lifted me out of the gutter, but no farther than the lowest step of his palace. But I, wishing to know Greek, after two years set out for Florence, hoping to find

a teacher in that city; but I found none,¹ though I heard much of Gemisthus Pletho and of his philosophy, which, as I thought, promised that Zeus was still immortal. Therefore I determined to seek him, and set out for Byzantium. Coming by the way to Ravenna, where I took ship, I who had first learned the verses of Dante from the donkey-men in the streets of Florence, seeing the candles burning before the Crucifix in the Duomo, and the tomb of the Divine Poet unremembered, thrust my way through the women and sailors assembled there, for it was the hour of sunset, and, seizing the candles in both hands, I brought them before the Tomb of him who is the star of Italy, saying so that all might hear, careless in my rage: "Thou art more worthy than the Crucified." And they fell upon me; but at last I came through what narrow ways I knew not to the port and the lagoon, and, seeing the very ship in which I expected to reach Byzantium already pulling up anchor, I swam out to her in the evening, and came on board wet but unhurt save for sundry bruises, and with all my possessions. Nor even yet can I explain my madness, nor account for the devil that urged me to such blasphemy; only God, who knows my heart, will pardon the rashness of a young man.

After many days we came to Byzantium; and though I found not Gemisthus at that time, there I lived seven years, learning Greek and copying many manuscripts. But at last I was weary, and longed for my own land, and, taking ship, I came to Naples; but there I found my parents dead and war about the city; so I set out again, and came to Marseilles; and thence I made my way to Avignon by the dangerous ways of France, partly for Petrarch's sake, for he loved the place, and there climbed Mont Vertoux for the sake of the view—a foolishness as men thought, a madness as some think—but I

¹ Yet Chrysoloras must have been in Florence, and his schools established in Rome, Milan, Venice, and Padua at this time.

have understood, and have spoken of this with Messer Leon Battista Alberti, as I shall record. Thence I came into Germany after many days in the forests, where the only sound is the clack of the leper's rattle, heard far away, and the wind among the dead leaves. So it was with much pleasure and curiosity that I came to the musical city of Nuremberg. I lived there for a year and more. Thence I set out for Milan; but the Duke Visconti loved me not, therefore I came to Florence, but with no better fortune at my journey's end save that I encountered Messer Carlo Marsupini, and disputed with him concerning the *In Catilinam* of Cicero.

Afterwards, thinking to return to Byzantium, where I had many friends, but wishing first to visit the Church of S. Francesco at Assisi and to win the indulgence of the Porziuncola, for I have ever had a special devotion for *il Poverello*, who was a wanderer even as I have been, I came to Assisi, and afterwards set out northward across the Furlo Pass among the mountains, and coming to Urbino, where Guidantonio of Montefeltro was then lord—he who had Madonna Rengarda of the Malatesta for wife—I stayed there for a month or more, ever longing for Byzantium, the city of my love: I remember, it was very early in the morning and dark when I set out down the steep way that leads from Urbino towards the sea.

It was an October evening when I came to Rimini, by chance almost, as I have said, for I had sought a ship in Pesaro; but none sailed my way for a month, they told me, so I went towards Rimini, since Ancona was so far, grumbling at my luck. I found the Inn just within the gate, and, having supped, went forth into the streets, that were well paved but strait; it seemed to me a grey city, for all the windows were hung with linen.

But I was thinking in my heart of my wandering life, I who was a Philosopher, learned in the ancient tongues, who

had written a commentary on Dante and could whisper the words of Plato. And I was sorry when I remembered that I was an exile and had no country, and that I too must say a little defiantly: "My country is the whole world." When I returned to the Inn there was some bustle, and it seemed they treated me with more consideration than before, for their welcome had not been over-courteous; and I learned that one had inquired for me, and they told me "Signor Sigismondo has sent for you"; then one offered to bring me to him, but I would not. As I spoke there entered a gentleman who bowed very courteously to me and asked how I did, assured me my fame was run before me, and that his lord earnestly desired my company. So I went with him; and we came to a fine house, but simple too, such as becomes a captain, not far from the great Piazza; and I was led into a fine room hung with tapestries, and the floor was soft with rushes. Then presently he who had brought me there came to me, and bade me follow him; and he led me into a great room, and one with the head of a god smiled at me, and bade me welcome. Thus I came into the house of Sigismondo, whom I have loved.

II

THE city of Rimini, where Sigismondo lived when he was not marching through Italy at the head of his troops, lies on the coast of the Adriatic not far from the sea which breaks there for many miles upon a lean and desolate shore. Something of the mysterious melancholy of Hellas, of Hellas fugitive before the barbarians, seems to me to have reached this land, across the waves that break upon her coast and ours.

Here the family of Malatesta has ruled for centuries, coming at first as saviours and remaining as tyrants and lords; for when Frederic Barbarossa and the Pope made treaty together at Constance in 1183, then the cities of Italy were divided in their allegiance, and every man, according to his pleasure or his profit, was a partisan either of the Empire or of the Pope, but none stood for Italy; and that peace might be brought to the cities divided thus against themselves, each called in a stranger to rule, naming him Captain of the people, Podestà or Conservitor of the public peace; and he enrolled under his banner paid soldiers, who followed him whither he went. It is precisely these captains who have stolen away Liberty and made themselves Lords and Princes, seizing at last the Government under the feeble guardianship of Pope or Emperor. Thus fell the Republics of my country.

It was somewhat in this fashion that the family of Malatesta came to Rimini. Bred at Penna Billi in Montefeltro, among the Apennines, we discern only two vague figures of their race, really mere names, Ugo and Giovanni of Penna

Billi, in all the twelfth century; it is not till we come to Giovanni, famous as a Captain, whom his soldiers called "Malatesta," even as later the soldiers named the peasant of Cotignolo Sforza for his violence, that there is any record of the ancestors of Sigismondo.

In the year 1216 this Giovanni Malatesta was called into Rimini by Ottone da Mendola, the Podestà, to defend the city against the people of Cesena. This he did so well that in 1237 he was himself appointed Podestà, making himself before long tryant and lord. He died in 1247: so the Malatesti came to Rimini.


Giovanni Malatesta had married a daughter of Pietro degli Onesti; she gave him two sons and a daughter—to wit, Malatesta da Verrucchio, born in 1212, who had Verrucchio from his wife Concordia, daughter of Guglielmo d'Enrighetto; Giovanni, born in 1218, who became Lord of Sogliano with the help of his wife, for she was a daughter of that house; and Emilia, of whom I know nothing.

Malatesta da Verrucchio lived at Verrucchio, till his father, dying in 1247, he, a hot Guelf, entered Rimini with his soldiers, accounting the city his heritage, and ready to support his claim against the Ghibelline family of Parcite. It was he who, with his son Malatestino, on the 13th day of December 1295, after fifty years of fighting, cut the throat of Montagna dei Parcitati, and brought back the Guelfs into Rimini. Our Dante has spoken of him in unforgettable words. Having been many times chosen Captain of the people, he seized the supreme power, and was at last acclaimed Lord of Rimini; nor was he without support from the Pope Boniface VIII., he who proclaimed that God had set him over kings and kingdoms, and who, since Verrucchio was of his party, and was ready to acknowledge his suzerainty, confirmed him in his lordship.

Verrucchio lived to be a hundred years old, and was

indeed the founder of his house. He married three times, and had in all four sons—to wit, Giovanni, born in 1245, surnamed “lo sciancato,” for he was a cripple; Paolo, born in 1252, surnamed “il bello,” for he was very fair; Malatestino, surnamed “del occhio,” for he was blinded in one eye by the Greek fire, while still a boy, one day of battle at Ravenna; and Pandolfo, afterwards Lord. These four sons Verrucchio trained up as soldiers and captains, using them as weapons, sending them against his enemies round about, and establishing them as Podestà in those cities where he had influence, or in those that he had already subdued; thus Giovanni was Podestà of Pesaro, while Paolo became Captain of the people in Florence; and in this way Verrucchio taught his sons to rule; yet he outlived the two elder, leaving his dominion at last to Malatestino, his third son, while Pandolfo succeeded his brother Giovanni in Pesaro.

It is with the two elder brothers, Giovanni lo Sciancato, called Gianciotto, and Paolo il Bello, that we come upon the great tragedy of the family of Malatesta. It happened thus; Giovanni, an hard man and cruel, as it is said, yet valiant too, fought day and night at the head of his men in his father's wars, and was come to be Podestà of Pesaro, where he lived, famous throughout the country as a leader and captain. And just as the Malatesti had expelled the Parcitati from Rimini, so the Polenti of Ravenna sought to cast out the Traversari from that city, and old Verrucchio sent his son Giovanni to help them in this, for he was their ally. And when Giovanni had driven them out Polenta gave him his daughter Francesca in marriage as spoil, for it was so agreed between him and Verrucchio. But lest she who was but a little dove should fear to wed with a cripple, an hard man, and one seared in the wars, Giovanni sent his younger brother, Paolo il Bello, to be his substitute.



It is said that at first sight, seeing him pass by as she stood at her window on her marriage morning, she loved him, and plucked a red rose that grew there, and gave it to him, believing him in all happiness to be her promised lord; but as he took the flower a thorn pricked her, so that a drop of blood fell between them.

Be this as it may, after many days she became aware and found that not Paolo il Bello but Giovanni lo Sciancato was indeed her husband. It was in the year 1275 that they were married. Some ten years later Paolo, being then Captain of the people in Florence, and married to Orabile di Chiagguolo, applied for leave to return for a short space to Rimini, for he was weary of himself far from Francesca. There in the old Gattolo di Sta. Columba, the castle of the Malatesti which Sigismondo pulled down to build his Rocca, Giovanni, who had returned in haste from Pesaro, found them, the fallen book beside them, and slew them with his sword even as Francesca told Dante, who has written over them the immortal epitaph that Sigismondo has envied them so often.¹

A mor che al cor gentil ratto s'apprende . . .
 mor che a nullo amato amar perdona . . .
 mor condusse noi ad una morte . . .

Not long after Giovanni, who was not the man to mourn for what was done and could never be undone, married that daughter of Tibaldello dei Zambresi of Faenza who had been the wife of Tino Ugolino Fantolini. Francesca had

¹This beautiful and immortal story, told so tamely by Sanseverino, has been the subject of much research and argument. It seems that while the late Luigi Tonini, the well-known humanist of Rimini, was convinced that Paolo and Francesca were slain at Rimini in the Gattolo, some assert, among them the late Monsignore Marino Marini, that it happened at S. Arcangelo, a fortress of the Malatesti, and others say that Pesaro was the place. See Yriarte : *Françoise de Rimini*.

given him a daughter, named strangely as we may think, Concordia, while his second wife brought him two sons. Giovanni died in 1304, Pesaro passing at his death back into the power of the Holy See. But Verrucchio never relinquished anything he had once set his teeth in. Pope Benedict XI. was just dead, and the Throne stood vacant for eleven months before Clement V., he who went to Avignon, was elected; so Verrucchio threw himself on Pesaro, and taking it, left Pandolfo, his youngest son, there as Podestà.

Verrucchio himself came to die at last in 1312. This great and splendid old man was a hundred years old at the time of his death. It was of him that Sigismondo ever thought as founder of the family and the dominion, for indeed it was he who taught to all his house the arts of war and government. To him succeeded Malatestino, the brutal and cunning victor of Cervia, which he added to his dominion. He ruled but five years, and in his turn was succeeded by his brother Pandolfo, who in his wars added Sinigaglia, Fano, and Fossombrone to his Pesaro, so that he looked further, and would have brought the whole March of Ancona under his rule, but that Clement V., fearing for his states, which Pandolfo, under the shadow of the Guelf banner, would certainly have taken, sent Bertrand de Got of the Marches against him, who was alternately victor and vanquished, in flight to-day, but returning to-morrow, till in 1314 Clement died, and the Throne being vacant, and none to urge them on, they fought for the sake of fighting, till in 1325 Pandolfo was invested with his lordship by a Bull of John XXII. But their war ceased not for this investiture, for they were in love with fighting, and would not be at peace, till at last they danged down to death.

Pandolfo had two sons, though I know not whom he married: their names were Pandolfo, surnamed Guastafamiglia, born in 1295, and Galeotto, born in 1302.

Now the Papacy was far away in Avignon, and Pope Benedict XII. just dead, so that the power of the Holy See seemed to be no more in Italy, therefore Guastafamiglia, desiring some authority to support his claims to Ancona, Jesi, Ascoli, Sinigaglia, and so forth, through the March of Ancona, turned to the Emperor Lewis of Bavaria in 1342, who made him a vicar of the Empire, drawing his right from the Emperor. But at last, in 1355, Pope Innocent VI. sent the great Spaniard, Cardinal Albornoz, to Romagna, who laid waste the cities and brought the Malatesti low. This terrible Captain Gil Alvarez Carillo di Albornoz was related to the royal houses of León and Aragon: he was born at Cuenca. While still a young man he was made Archbishop of Toledo by Alfonso XI. of Castile, whose life he is said to have saved at Tarifa in battle with the Moors in 1340. After the siege of Algeciras, which he conducted successfully, he was made knight. Pedro el Cruel, as I have heard, hated him, because he rebuked him for his licentious life, and on this account he fled to the Pope at Avignon, Clement VI. it was, a learned man, who made him Cardinal. We may now see clearly enough that it was to prepare the way for the return of the Papacy that Albornoz was sent to Italy in 1355. For Innocent VI. saw in the condition of Italy, and especially of Rome, a chance to re-establish a temporal kingdom, the first necessity of which was his return to Rome. Albornoz fell on Romagna like a thunderstorm, sweeping the world. He was a soldier-priest, he prayed as he fought furiously. He flung back the Malatesti from hilltop after hilltop; he crushed them in the narrow valleys and scattered them in the plains; one by one the fair cities fell from their grasp, until at Gubbio Albornoz took Galeotto Malatesta prisoner, seizing thus all their dominion under one crown. But Guastafamiglia, remembering his vicariate, appealed to the Emperor, and to the Florentines, whose armies he had commanded.

They bade him negotiate, promising him support; so that the Pope, face to face with Emperor and Republic, gave Guastafamiglia and Galeotto his own investiture, and made them his vicars, giving Rimini to Galeotto, and Pesaro to Guastafamiglia. Then, as I have heard, he turned to Albornoz, and demanded the spoils of the cities he had taken, with their tribute; and the Cardinal, in a rage, caused a waggon to be loaded with the keys of those cities, and sent them to the Pope.

Galeotto saw that the Pope was once more powerful in Italy, for after the victories of Albornoz, Urban V. returned to Rome, to the joy of all save his Cardinals, in 1367; not for long however, for three years later, Albornoz being dead he was back in Avignon, where he died three months after his return. It remained for his successor, Gregory XI., to decide once for all whether the Holy See should be any more a power in Italy. Not without fear, then, he set out, entering Rome at last in 1377, led back by the hand of St Catherine, of which sight Galeotto was a witness, as it is said, and was strangely moved thereby, so that he grew ardent for the Holy See, and by leave of Gregory added in that same year Cesena, Cervia, and Bertinoro to his lordship. Yet indeed Gregory's return was like to prove as unfortunate as Urban's; for he found Rome a ruin, and the people starving, while his troops were powerless against the league of the Florentines, who raised all Italy against his Frenchmen. Finding himself in this case, he determined to return to Avignon, and was indeed about to set out thither when he died.

Then followed the years of the Great Schism so disastrous for Christendom, robbing the Church of her unity, and giving, as I have thought, new life to that illegitimacy which has been the greatest misfortune of our country. In those days the Malatesti were for the Holy See in Rome, raising the people of Cesena against Robert of Geneva, afterwards

antipope, whose watchward was "Blood, blood, and justice," though the last he never had from us, nor we from him.

Galeotto had married in 1363 Gentile Verrano, who brought him four sons and four daughters to wit—Carlo, born in 1364; Pandolfo, born in 1370; Andrea, born in 1373; and Galeotto, born in 1377; Madonna Gentile, who married Giovanni Galeazzo d'Astorre Manfredi of Faenza; Madonna Margherita, who married Ludovico Gonzaga; Madonna Ricciarda, who married Maso di Pietra Mala; and Madonna Rengarda, who married Guidantonio of Urbino. For his sons, Carlo took Rimini, when his father died in 1385; Pandolfo had Fano; Andrea, Cesena and Bertinoro; while Galeotto took Cervia, Meliola and Borgo S. Sepolcro.

I have thought well to tell thus much concerning the ancestors of Sigismondo, those ancestors whom he has ever held in such honour, that whosoever may chance upon this manuscript may fully understand of what a race Sigismondo was sprung; but now that I am come to write his father's name and the name of his uncle, I know not well how to continue, for in them I discern how clearly the very ghost of him I have loved, and I am fearful lest after all I should with my poor skill rob these two Signori of life, who were so full of vitality—a new sort of vitality, that seems to me to distinguish the men of our own time from those of the fourteenth century, or indeed of any other age since the fall of Rome.

Pandolfo Malatesta, Sigismondo's father, was but fifteen years old when Galeotto died, leaving him Fano for his heritage. His elder brother, Carlo, had at the age of twenty-one succeeded to the lordship of Rimini, and those old castles and estates never divided from the city. Carlo at any rate, and as it might seem in a lesser degree Pandolfo too, had been educated by Messer Leonardo degli Allegretti, who took refuge in Rimini when Forlì cast him out as a Guelf. A man

already eager for the more human learning of an age he died too soon to see, Carlo was a soldier of fortune, and often in his company Pandolfo went forth to fight in whatever cause pleased Carlo; of all the Malatesti they seem to have loved one another best. And it appears to have been ever thus in Romagna, that if a fragile peace wearied them they sought service in another cause; it was so with Carlo and Pandolfo Malatesta. At first they followed Visconti, Gian Galeazzo, dreaming perhaps, as Sigismondo has sometimes done, of a United Italy to be formed under Milan or the Church; and indeed in those days there remained no power in Italy save Florence to stand against Visconti and his generals. Later Carlo took command of the troops of Francesco Gonzaga, whose daughter he had married, but Pandolfo still followed the fortunes of Milan.

At last, in the plague which fell on Lombardy in 1402, Gian Galeazzo died, though indeed he fled to the castle of Marignano to escape it; for great though he was he was ever made coward by the thought of death, so that he never went into battle, but left all to his generals, directing them from afar. Then that fine thought, the unity of Italy, which his enemies ever translated into the enslavement of our country, passed from men's minds, and those generals, impregnable under his hand, seized what they were able of his vast dominion, and many of those families he had dispossessed returned, such as the Scotti, to Piacenza.

Now Pandolfo, hearing that Facino Cane held Alessandria, and would not let it go, and seeing that Gian Maria and his brother Filippo, the heirs of Gian Galeazzo, were but children, while the Duchess Caterina with her paramour Barbavara ruled in Milan, thought to secure something for himself; but he was not fortunate. Wandering at large with his men, he came to Monza, which he seized, and later took Brescia also. In Milan they proclaimed Gian Maria Duke, he whose lust

was insatiable in its cruelty, and who chased men with the dogs of Squarcia Giramo; not for long, however, for in 1412 the nobles of Milan fell upon him, and having killed him, flung his body into the street. It is said there was no one to bury him till a woman came, and having covered his body with roses, bore it away; and men said she must have been a prostitute, since none but such loved him. So Filippo became Duke in Milan.

Pandolfo held Brescia for seventeen years, and there his three sons were born—Galeotto in 1411 by Madonna Allegra di Mori, one of his mistresses; while another lady Madonna Antonia,¹ of noble family, daughter of Giacomo da Barignano, gave birth on 19th June 1417 to Sigismondo Pandolfo, and a year later to Domenico, known to all as Malatesta Novello.

So it was in the year 1417, at Brescia, that Signor Sigismondo was born of a mother who was not his father's wife; nor, as it seems to me, who have known and loved Sigismondo, did he ever regret this fact concerning his birth, though it brought him trouble enough later. His father had married twice, and later, at the earnest entreaty of his brother, he married a third time, but he had no children by his wives. He remained in Brescia till, a little weary of the struggle against Filippo Visconti, who was busy reconstructing his dominion, gathering around him, as his father had done, many generals, he was turned out by one of them, Francesco Busone, famous as Carmagnola. But Carlo Malatesta being friends with Milan, and Pope Martin V., then in that city on his way into Italy from Constance, being eager for peace, Pandolfo was reconciled to Visconti, and returned with Madonna Antonia and his children to Fano.

¹ See Battaglini: *Basini Parmensis Poetae Opera*: Arimini 1744, vol. ii. p. 274. Clementini, *Raccolto Istoric della Fondazione di Rimini*, Rimini 1617, vol. ii. p. 299, suggests two other ladies.

Sigismondo was two years old when he first came to Fano, and ten when in 1427, his father Pandolfo being dead, he went to live in the house of his uncle, Carlo Malatesta at Rimini.

Carlo Malatesta was a man of austere heart, passionately religious. He had fought for Visconti and for Venice; but when in 1408 Pope Gregory XII. on the eve of the Council of Pisa, took refuge in Rimini, Carlo became his champion, journeying in the next year to Pisa on his behalf in an endeavour to make terms between the Pope and the Council. In this he was unsuccessful; but when John XXIII. anti-pope and adventurer, Baldassare Cossa, that robber who worked by night and slept only at dawn, tried to win him to his side against the true Pope Gregory, Carlo made answer that he could not, since Cossa was not fit to be Pope, and if he were there was a Pope already: thus with Ladislas of Naples he stood for the Church in Italy. Among all the Princes of Italy at that time he alone seems to have done his utmost to end the Schism. And at last, weary of the struggle, Gregory sent him as his representative to the Council of Constance, there to make his abdication.

He was a soldier too, and a great one; yet Fortebraccio, who had served under Alberigo da Barbiano, defeated him, when, with Galeotto his brother's son, but five years old, in his train, he went to help the Perugians against their countryman in 1416. Messer Paolo Uccello has painted more than one picture of this battle, called of St Egidio, since it was fought near that place close to Assisi on the Tiber. Here Carlo was taken prisoner, and Galeotto with him. You may see him in one of Messer Paolo's pictures riding under the banner of Fortebraccio, through the fields of Umbria by a hedge of roses mixed with pomegranates and oranges, which certainly do not grow there now; while the young

Galeotto carries his bassinet in his hand.¹ Carlo with his nephew was ransomed, in part by Guidantonio of Urbino, who was to be the implacable enemy of his house, and later he became vicar of the Church and Guardian of Romagna for the Pope.

How often has Sigismondo told me stories of his father and his uncle, contrasting their characters, for he revered them both, but his father had his love.

Thus he would recount with I knew not what pride that the Florentine Ambassador praised them as men of learning and the friends of scholars; and indeed they wrote in Latin and understood the French tongue. And he would tell me how Messer Simone di Ser Dino da Siano, orator of the Tartaglia chapel, came one day into his father's company, and, thinking to puzzle him, recited some sonnets in three tongues, but Pandolfo heard him, and replied as seemed good to him. Or again, how one day the Marchese Nicolò d'Este, having invited Carlo and Pandolfo with their brother-in-law Francesco Gonzaga to dinner, there came also Messer Giacomo da Reggio, the learned physician; and Pandolfo, who delighted in learning, and honoured it, stood up, and begged Nicolò d'Este to give the first place to science. Or again, he would tell me how he corresponded in Latin with Madonna Isotta Nogarola, who had lent him a book of Plutarch's.

Then speaking of Carlo, who was an austere man and loved the Church, he has told me, laughing the while, yet with a sort of protest too very characteristic of him, how Carlo Malatesta, entering Mantua one day of October at the head of his troops, found that the people had built an altar under the statue of Virgil, and set flowers and

¹The picture Sanseverino describes seems to be the one now in the National Gallery; but there are two others, one in the Louvre and one in the Uffizi.

candles before it; and, suddenly angry at this idolatry, he bade his men seize the statue and throw it into the Mincio; the which they did, and even till to-day there is no statue to that divine poet in Mantua.

The people called him Marcus Cato, but they loved him; and though he was fond rather of theology than of poetry or philosophy, he gave laws to Rimini which stand even now. He was the friend too of Messer Giovanni Malpighini, who had known Petrarch; while at Rimini in the Gattolo he founded the first Academia in Italy, and copied manuscripts with his own hand. He was a mystic too, and spoke in parable, and as Sigismondo always thought it was he who influenced Galeotto, so that he thought more of his soul than of his lordship, and of his death than his life. He fought hard for the Holy See at Pisa, at Constance, and in battle too; but his descendants got little by that, for if Carlo supported the Pope at Pisa, it was another Pope who robbed his heirs of half their lordship. Martin V. gave him his niece in marriage, but she was barren; while Eugenius IV. gave him the Golden Rose—it was all they gave; and when Carlo besought the Pope to legitimise his brother's children, not once nor twice but many times, and went to Rome and humbled himself for this favour, all he got was the Pope's leave to leave his own to whom he would.

These things and more Sigismondo has told me in the evenings on the ramparts when the moon comes up out of the sea like some mysterious goddess and the songs in the city are still.

III

THE Gattolo de' Malatesti at Rimini where Galeotto, Sigismondo and Domenico, the sons of Pandolfo, came to live under the guardianship of their uncle, Carlo Malatesta, was the old fortress of the Malatesta family just within the walls to the west of the city, which lay between it and the sea. Not without a sort of beauty, as I know, the rude, fierce beauty of a fortress built for defence, with something too of the distinction that age lends even to a building so rambling, so contrived as it were, added to as it had been from time to time, its outward aspect at any rate was one of almost brutal strength and endurance, that had withstood fire and assault, and had ever defied the conqueror. In its walls no enemy had ever made a breach; and it may well be that something of the security, which the knowledge of that ancient invincibility taught to its possessors, encouraged in them a natural inclination to surround themselves with beautiful things, to make themselves at home there, as the Germans might say, but in a way no German has yet been able to understand.

For the humanism of Carlo, Lord of Rimini, expressed itself not only in the study of languages, a delight in Literature, and the learning that was just then coming into the world, but in a love of Art also, of painting at anyrate, so that he covered the rude walls, hung till then with arras and cloths, with pictures in fresco; and as it happened at that time—to wit, in 1400—the plague raging in Florence, a certain craftsman of that city, Messer Lorenzo Ghiberti, later to be so famous, came into Romagna with another

painter, whose name I know not, and worked in a chamber of the old Castle, covering the walls with paintings, at the suggestion, as Sigismondo has told me, of his father, but certainly not without the eager consent of Carlo, who was Lord. Thus it was in Rimini that the first works of the famous Florentine were accomplished, for indeed he hurried back thence at the earnest entreaty of his father to compete with Messer Filippo Brunelleschi for the design of the gates of S. Giovanni Battista in Florence.

It was in the presence of work so fine as that of Messer Lorenzo Ghiberti that Sigismondo grew up with his younger brother Domenico for playmate, while Galeotto was at the wars with his uncle. And as we may think such work could not but influence him deeply, full as it was of the new spirit, that in reality was so old, older almost than anything else around him, save the hills, the fields, and the sea which so few have cared for, or that old arch of Augustus and the Roman bridge across the Marecchia, which seem to possess in themselves something of the strong eternal beauty of natural things, that come to me with so much pathos, so pensively as it were; so that I understood Messer Leon Battista Alberti at once when he told me that, looking on the autumn fields, he wept, he knew not why.

There in those old chambers hung with arms gleaming grimly on winter evenings in the dim light of the braziers, half full of the white ashes of the olive-root, while on a great table here and there lay a Book of Hours or the Sonnets of Petrarch, Sigismondo wandered as a boy, wondering often at the beautiful armour, breathlessly delighted when now and then his uncle would place on his head some battered helmet and dress him in the cuirass of old Verrucchio or arm him with some antique sword. Often as he lay in his chair in the twilight watching the lad "playing at soldiers," a little weary perhaps of the

intrigues that had been thrust upon him, that it was necessary for him to pursue in his old age after a life of action, lest Galeotto, who seemed never to be so happy as when turning the pages of the service books or reading the lives of the Saints, flitting here and there like a ghost almost among the great shadows, should with his brothers lose his heritage—Carlo, looking at Sigismondo, as I have heard, would smile to himself, as though in his heart he was sure that he who played at fighting with so much earnestness might after all be trusted to retain his own by the only means recognised at that time, and even now too for that matter, as of indisputable right, the indomitable courage of his heart, the strength of his right hand.

And there would be stories too, stories of the family, of their adventures, of the fights of old Verrucchio, or of Signor Carlo's own youth—of the coming to Rimini, of the fugitive Pope, of the adventures of Signor Pandolfo, their father, when he and Carlo, two boys together, took service in Lombardy. And then what breathless, nay tearful fascination lay in the story of Paolo and Francesca, of Giovanni the hunchback, who slew them because they loved one another. How often would Sigismondo clamour for that tale at bed-time, when Carlo was about to dismiss them, knowing that his uncle was as fascinated by it as himself. Then Carlo, taking from its place the beautiful copy of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, which was the spoil of war, would read to them, half bewildered, the beautiful tremulous words, while Sigismondo, a little lad, at his uncle's feet, rocked himself to the cadence of the verses, only dimly in some far-off way comprehending their meaning, but moved by them nevertheless, the tears at last shining in his eyes.

More than once in those days, the story ended, Sigismondo had asked: "And was it here, sir, that this befell?"

And Carlo, looking at him over the great leaves of the

book, would answer: "Here in the Gattolo, in the room in the tower that is always closed."

But when Sigismondo had asked to be shown the place Carlo had hesitated, and at last dismissed them without answering directly; for indeed that door was ever kept shut.

But on one of those winter evenings when the wind blew shrewdly round the old Gattolo, and the moan of the sea came from afar across the city, and the rain beat hard upon the windows, and the yelping of the wolves could be heard now and again without the walls, his uncle being in Rome with Signor Nicolò d'Este, anxious too for the legitimation of his heir, Sigismondo had, by what means I know not, obtained the key of the room in the tower, and creeping up the stairway long after he was thought to be asleep, startled often by the weird, leaping shadows cast by the moonlight that streamed now and then through the racing clouds, reached that mysterious door, and at last, summoning all his courage, turned the key, and in the uncertain light gazed into the great chamber that had been the apartment of Madonna Francesca of the Polente. If you can imagine how an imaginative boy come to so dreadful, so fascinating a spot, might, on such a night certainly, have an inkling that he saw more than was actually there—the stains of blood on the floor, or Francesca herself perhaps, who was really only present in his heart—you may conceive aright the impression Sigismondo received from this adventure, of which he has told me he has spoken to no one but myself, nor did he ever return there again.

When Carlo returned in summer-time, those long, languorous summer days, when the wind from the sea seems to linger so thoughtlessly, on its way to the stifled city, they would start sometimes, early in the morning, a joyful company, the old man and his nephews, for a little villa on the coast, where under the shadow of the pines, a whole, new, delightful world

lay ready for discovery. While Carlo was engaged in business, or talking to some ambassador with Galeotto beside him, Sigismondo and Domenico would wander away on the sea shore, or ride races along the sands, or, building a castle on the beach, defend or attack it, leading their companions. There were surprising things to be found too on that mysterious and desolate coast: the skull of some pirate, perhaps cast up by the sea, as Carlo told them, tapping it gently, when they brought it to him in triumph, interrupting him, it may be, in graver business. And once Sigismondo happened upon a fragment of ancient marble, a little hand lying there softly on the sand, among the shells fretted by the wind or the clinging, damp sea-weeds, that the sun was fast shrivelling up. As he lifted it eagerly some new emotion seemed to awake in his heart, so that he hid it in his bosom without telling anyone of his discovery, and for days after would take it out often to look at it again, so beautiful it was. Then there was the abandoned galley, with its bronze plates eaten away by the sea and the weather, so that in places the wood was stained with the precious metal; and already the anemones had made it their prey, peering shyly and wistfully from its crevices in the sea-wind, really the representatives of a whole kingdom of such things which fall upon the dead, as I seem to understand, but, as the lads told one another, not without awe, the souls of those sailors that had passed into another life, the life of the flowers, perhaps for some crime which condemned them to a state so narrow, ever at the mercy of autumn and winter, that seemed to die daily, and yet never really to pass away. One day in the woods they came upon the cave of these sailors as they supposed, a charming and delightful place, hidden among the brambles, partly built of pine and logs, partly hewn out of the rock and the tufa of a Roman tumulus. And, scrambling there in their games, they found a bag of gold pieces, stamped with the

debased head of one of the later Emperors, and later, in searching further, they discovered a coffer full of swords, that fell into red dust, magically almost, when they tried to draw them out, seizing on them with shouts of delight.

Was that a parable, as it were, of what his life must be—one of those hints as to the future that, as he thought, occasionally came to him, perhaps from the stars whom he has invoked not without a real and naïve earnestness, a belief in their influence over the lives of men? Certainly he came upon many rare and valuable things, and sought, how eagerly, to possess them, but when he would have grasped them they dissolved into dust under his hands, leaving just a red stain, or a bitter sense of defeat, of the enmity of the Gods, of some invisible power that was not on his side.

But it was not always so peacefully the days passed away in his childhood, but sometimes with storms too, storms of childish anger and pride and wilfulness, that marked him out beyond his brothers as one of his race. And there were other moments too of a more sinister significance, moments of cruelty that came to so terrible a development later, which I cannot excuse, can never sufficiently regret, but which I dare not ignore since I desire to speak of him as he was, with all his faults of vitality, that in some sort he caught from his age; crimes that won him so much hatred, fear, and vengeance. How to account for a certain barbarism in one who in some things was the foremost humanist of his day? Is it that there lingers even yet in some of us more than we care to admit of the spirit of an age so different, that after all has but just passed away? Do our ancestors after all but sleep in our hearts, sleep lightly, awakening now and again, transforming us into their likeness, and dulling the sensibilities that seemed to have cut us off irrevocably from communion with them? And indeed this new sense of pity among

men, unknown, as I have thought, to the great Roman world, and scarcely to be discerned even in the writings of Plato, often seems to me to be a tender growth that might easily be broken altogether and forgotten. For in our time, anxiously and eagerly conscious of the greatness of the pagan world, there might seem to be no room for pity, if it were not for the experience of the age which stands for ever between us and antiquity, in which St Francis shines like a beacon, a visible reminder of Jesus Christ, who had pity on the blind, on the birds, on the lepers—yes, and even on the dead. Just that sense of the sadness of things, their claim upon us, for a sort of respect of their wretchedness seems to me sometimes to be passing away, and yet again at other moments, in the company of such a man as Messer Leon Battista Alberti, for instance, to be stronger than ever, but to be only partially appreciated; wholly ignored by some of the greatest spirits, as indeed by Sigismondo himself, and in that, I sometimes think, now when I think of him continually, in that lay his greatest limitation, a real wound in his spirit, a scar left by his remote ancestors who had lived on mankind; so that he was really a cripple, having the use after all of but half of the nature of man, or blind, as it were, in one of the eyes of the soul. And it was not war or hardship or misfortune that rendered him indifferent to the horror of physical torture or pain, giving him a sense of triumph, almost, at the power of the strong over the weak, an abuse of power that he was not strong enough to resist. Even as a child, as I have heard, he was not able to understand or to feel what I suppose in truth one would call the chivalry that is owing to the weak, as women or children or animals, from the strong, to the slave from his master, and, pushed to the farthest height of human understanding, comes at last to mean the difference between justice and mercy—justice being blind, but mercy watchful

and full of understanding of the pardon that lies behind a true comprehension of every weakness or brutality. Such thoughts I have seemed to discover behind the words of Messer Vespasiano di Bisticci, and they seem almost to have been expressed by the life of St Francis, which so few have understood, and which our day has been content to ignore. Certainly such thoughts were foreign to the mind of Sigismondo. For, as I have heard, wandering one day in the woods with Domenico, his brother, during those long days of childhood that after all were so few, he came upon a dove, wounded it may be by some hawk, or in some love contest, such as they share with us. After a chase among the briars and brambles they caught it, and, bringing it to the cave, in mere wantonness plucked it naked, a mere bleeding, grotesque little body, while it struggled now and then, and uttered tiny shrieks which maybe they could not hear, twittering in vain to itself or its companions, dying at last as the remaining feathers were torn away in the hands of Sigismondo covered with its blood; while Galeotto, who had come upon them, stood watching, helpless and in tears, wringing his hands. Was such a thing in its horror, to me at least, significant of what his life was to be; was he ever to wash his hands clean of that innocent blood?

However weak that may seem, the mere meandering of an old scholar, an old humanist, the fit companion as some still hold only of women, who, wandering through the world, has seemed to understand how hard men are with one another, I cannot but think that he who plucked that living dove had already committed in his heart all the crimes of his later life, that after that the rest was inevitable. Yet after all that is but a tale, may be contrived by them who hated him. But there were horrors of which, as he grew older, he was inevitably a witness. The

torture and death of a rebellious slave, caught in his flight through the woods at daybreak; the burning of a witch who had muttered some insult at the Bishop, whom, it may be, she had no cause to love; the brutality of one in a little brief authority to another who was in his power. Are these excuses for him, who I am sure at certain times must have felt the pitifulness of things, the tears there behind the valour and the sunshine, in any single thought of the world? Yet, when I have ventured to speak to him of cruelty, he has laughed at me without understanding. And it was once when, more insistent than usual, I had begged him to bear with me, that he told me of certain horrors of his childhood, light-heartedly and with indifference, so that in very love of him, and in shame too, since his shame was mine, I crept away without saying anything in reply, to ponder for my relief the hard and yet consoling thoughts of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus concerning a world as indifferent—men being really unable to understand his intention towards them, his love, which by reason of that indifference was so ineffectual. Well, I too have not been able to save Sigismondo from such indifference and its consequences, which at last left him almost without a friend, for what can I account myself, poor, old, and unused to arms as I am, as I was, when he needed me?

Yet these episodes of his childhood, that was so quickly passing away, are but incidents after all, full of indicative importance it is true, filling, as we may think, the future with a sort of foreboding, but by no means representing the whole growing nature of the boy or the tenour of his days. If there was cruelty in his heart there was joy too, and, as he was soon to prove, cruelty had by no means sapped his courage or overthrown as yet the greatness of his personality. All through his life it was as though two enemies fought in his soul, each demanding the mastery; as though indeed in

Sigismondo old Verrucchio had come to life again full of the enthusiasm and violence of his time, and scornful too of that other he found there—Sigismondo himself as I like to believe, a man of our time, of the new age that was just then dawning on the world. Is it not the struggle between these two forces after all that I have watched breathlessly all my life, as though the dead fought with the living, and might well snatch the victory.

But it was not for long Sigismondo's boyhood lasted, full of thought and reverie, and the daily exercise of arms, the training for action insisted upon by his uncle, together with the training of the mind no less, a matter of importance as he thought. For already, as Carlo had foreseen, the enemy was at the gate, implacable and determined, as Sigismondo was to find his whole life long. Even before Carlo's death, which happened on the 29th of September 1429, Malatesta of Pesaro and Guidantonio of Urbino, seeing that there was no legitimate heir to his lordship, had made treaty together to divide his dominion between them, the one finding his right in Guastafamiglia, brother of Galeotto, father of Carlo, the other in his wife Rengarda, Carlo's sister, dead in 1423. And even as Carlo had married Vittoria di Lorenzo Colonna, niece to Pope Martin V., hoping for an heir, or at least for the good will of the Holy See in safeguarding his lordship, so Guidantonio of Urbino, after Madonna Rengarda's death, married Caterina, sister to Vittoria, and for the same reason, in which he was more fortunate than Carlo.

For Martin V., in coming to Italy in 1419 from the Council of Constance, had found his states full of disorder, and the temporal power of the Holy See for the most part a thing of the past, seeing that the dominion of the Church had passed, during the exile of the Popes and the confusion of the Schism, into the hands of many lords, among whom not the least was Carlo Malatesta. And on the death of

Carlo, who, it is true, had gained the Pope's leave to leave his lordship of Rimini, Fano, Cesena, Bertinoro, Cervia and Sarsina, Sinigaglia, Fossombrone, Osimo, and Borgo S. Sepolcro to Galeotto just then eighteen years old, Malatesta of Pesaro and Guidantonio of Urbino were not slow to suggest to the Pope that such a dominion would be better in their hands than under the careless rule of Galeotto, a bastard, still young, who might not be too friendly, as they pointed out, to His Holiness and the Papacy.

A strange figure you may think this youth of eighteen, who, though he had followed Carlo in his wars, was already a mystic, a member of the Third Order of St Francis, and, as it proved, ready to sacrifice his lordship to his dream. And certainly in this family of soldiers and tyrants, who had always worshipped force whether of body or mind, and so often set God and the Church at defiance, he seems like a stranger. Yet Carlo too fought hard for the Church, and was called an holy man by Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi. It was his influence, as Sigismondo has thought, that at first turned Galeotto's mind towards heaven, so that at last he became a sort of monk, watching eagerly every day to see the priest make Christ out of bread and wine, accounting his life nothing, waiting daily for his death. But since he thought little of his Lordship, gradually it was taken from him, not by the rebellion of his subjects, who loved him, and called him Saint, but by the Church, who, if Galeotto thought only of heaven, under Martin V., and Eugenius IV., a self-willed violent man, elected in 1431, seemed to think of nothing but earth.

Often Sigismondo has told me how he would creep up to his brother's room, and hear his groans and the blows of the whip with which he flogged himself; while the people say that he wore a hair shirt till his body was a single wound. He had married Margherita d'Este, who seems to have loved him,

though he lived with her as with a sister; yet she who survived him more than forty years remained ever faithful to him, desiring to be buried with him at last.

But Martin V. desired his Lordship, and seeking for some excuse to take it from him, urged thereto by Malatesta of Pesaro and the Count of Urbino, at last remembered that Galeotto and his brothers were bastards, and again that Carlo Malatesta had not of late paid the tribute yearly due to the Church from him as Vicar of the Holy See, so he sent certain Captains, Andrea della Serra, Luca da Castello and others, against him. But Galeotto, as though unaware of danger, retired to his cell in the convent of Franciscans at S. Arcangelo, striving from there to pacify his enemies, asking at last for leave to expel all the Jews from Rimini, telling the Pope that this would be the crowning deed of his life; and Martin gave him leave. Meantime Sigismondo, then just thirteen years old, crossed the Foglio by night, leaving Rimini secretly, and fell upon the armies of Malatesta of Pesaro and the Count of Urbino encamped at Serra Ungarina, and dispersed them. Then the Pope, seeing his friends discomfited, made peace with Galeotto, stripping him of more than half his dominion it is true, but reaffirming him in his vicariate of Rimini, Cesena and Fano in March 1430. But Pesaro and Urbino were not yet content, so they plotted how they might seize these cities also.

It was in the midst of these alarms, secretly almost and without ostentation, as he had desired in his will, that on the 10th of October 1432 the Franciscan Brothers bore the body of Galeotto, dead of wounds at last, to the Campo Santo, outside the doors of S. Francesco, where they buried him, in an open tomb, as he had appointed, covered later with an iron grill, for the people worshipped him as a Saint, and desired his bones as relics. Nevertheless, Sigismondo destroyed his tomb in the year 1454, when he laid the dust of Galeotto with

the bones of his ancestors, in the tomb he had made for them.

But the times called for action: if Galeotto had his treasure in heaven, the Lordship of the Malatesti was at stake, their fortunes on a narrow bridge, and foes both before and behind them. For on the death of Galeotto, Margherita d'Este, his wife, and Elisabetta Gonzaga, the widow of Carlo, who had no love for his nephew, were appointed regents during the infancy of Sigismondo; and Giovanni di Ramberto, their counsellor with his friends, tried to divide the city against the family; while Andrea della Serra, watched by those two wolves of Pesaro and Urbino, and encouraged by Pope Eugenius IV., more hasty and less strong than Martin V., marched and counter-marched, burning and slaying, seizing castles and cities in the dominion, at last laying siege to Rimini itself. And, seeing their danger, the people of Rimini and Fano protested to the Pope their allegiance to the family of Malatesta, sending some of their richest citizens to Rome to assure the Holy See of their loyalty to the sons of Pandolfo; without effect as it proved, for already Rimini was besieged.

But Sigismondo, though still a boy, left Rimini in disguise, knowing well that the people were on his side, and, coming to Cesena, called the people together, and harangued them, telling them that their fate depended upon themselves, whether they should fall more dead than alive into the hands of the Pope and the Pope's friends, or live prosperously, as they had done under the rule of his house. And they welcomed him with shoutings; and he gathered there an army of some four thousand foot and three hundred horse, and left Cesena secretly.

As I sit now in this quiet garden at Fiesole, while the south wind is stripping the almond-trees of blossom, and the earth is tremulous with spring, I seem to see him ride

out, silently as was his wont, his hair already pressed as by the crown of Italy, that was after all to be only the iron casque of a soldier of fortune. Boy though he was, I am sure there was not one among those who followed him who was doubtful of victory. He was not of those who are defeated, save by themselves. So they followed him through the night out of the city of Cesena.

And, hearing that Carlo Malatesta of Pesaro was besieging S. Lungarino, he fell upon him suddenly, and, though outnumbered, defeated him, and chased him through the valleys. And from that day all Italy saw in him a great soldier, since he, at the age of fifteen, a novice, with but few men, had beaten a veteran.

Seeing, then, that once more the Malatesti had a leader whom the people would follow, a man fearless and full of vitality, Eugenius IV. made peace with him, confirming him in his lordship of Rimini, Cesena, and Fano. Thus again might was stronger than right, and overcame it; for if, as the Pope asserted, Galeotto, being illegitimate, had no right to the lordship of Carlo, no more had Sigismondo, who was bastard too; yet he would have deprived the one while he confirmed the other. It seems to be ever thus in Italy, where the only right is force, and virtue is, as of old, a sort of vitality and fitness.

Thus Sigismondo's childhood came to an end earlier than usual, yet leaving there in his heart certain indelible needs, a desire for action certainly, an immense ambition. Not to be unworthy of his ancestors, it was a lesson he learned well. And if this idea possessed him thus early it was not in the world of action alone that he conceived his future might lie, but in the new world of thought and art too, into which he had been born, and whose champion he desired to be. For the instability of their dominion had turned the thoughts of the Signori towards another kingdom, where

fortune was not so fickle as in the practical affairs of men. It was as though at this time the tyrants had sought to find excuse for their rule, illegitimate as it was, in a patronage, an eager defence, of the new learning or of the arts.

Looking back now on my life, on the history of my country, it is this canker at her heart that might seem to be the disease of which one day, alas! not distant, she must die—I mean illegitimacy, not of birth alone, but of government, of life. For no state save Venice has escaped this curse; is not Aragon sprung from a bastard, and the houses of Este, La Scala, Bentivogli, and Montefeltro are they unsuspect? And in government too, if we ask how Sforza came by Milan, or the Malatesti by Rimini, or any of these tyrants by their lordships, shall we not find that it was nearly always by illegitimate means that they gained their power? while not long since illegitimate Popes claimed and held the allegiance of half Europe.

And when I remember those cities through which I have wandered, and find there almost no unity at all, so that Italy does not really exist save in the mind of a dreamer like myself; when I know that in every man there is a partisan and not a patriot, that each man has ever been for the Empire or for the Holy See, for this city or for that, but never for Italy, and that the smallest pretext is enough to unchain these baying dogs—then it seems to me that indeed we must be on the eve of awakening, and that this enthusiasm for life which is everywhere about me must force upon us a consciousness of our nationality; and whether it be Pope or Emperor who will save us matters nothing so that we are made one, every man with his brother.

Ah! with what longing and envy I have looked towards those merry German cities, Nuremberg, for instance, where life is embittered by no political factions; or to England, where I have heard there is a real personal loyalty, a sort of half

religious devotion to the Prince, so characteristic of the North! Perhaps it is impossible to be loyal to a power illegitimate in its essence in a land where everything is illegitimate, even Love. Is it because these lordships are illegitimate, illegitimate that is as based on no principle, derived in no regular way, but held as prizes, that those who hold them must aggrandise themselves? Indeed, Dante has told us in his *De Monarchia* that "Nobility rests in personal excellence or in that of our ancestors!"

But fragile are the thrones of Captains whose praise is war. Not one of them has been able to forge out of this seething mass of iron the sword that shall be Italy. Even as the Visconti fell, while the flesh of men was sold in the streets, so will they fall. Yet I believe and am sure that one day there will arise a man who will remember that Cæsar made himself master of Italy in three months, and in less than two years founded the Empire that in some sort has lasted till our day. It might seem that it is a harder deed to mould a nation out of many dukedoms, counties, and lordships, without law, without government, without patriotism, in whose cities Man seems suddenly to have awakened, and, bewildered by the beauty and splendour of the world, to have fallen an easy prey to tyrants. It is of one of them I have set myself to write.

For I too have loved Sigismondo for his force, virtue, and worth, and for no cause beyond reason. Not that he was my Prince, but that he has found it necessary to his own spirit to place himself at the head of the culture of his time, and because he was beautiful, fearless, and unfortunate. And I too have nothing but my own personality to depend on and the free cities have been my enemies, but the Tyrants have been my friends. Thus, like Plato in Athens, I praise the government of Sparta, which would have imprisoned me, and legitimately taken away my life.

IV

To be worthy of his ancestors! Certainly that was no shameful desire, yet after all had he not a duty to his own time no less insistent? Not to be unworthy of himself, of the new and precious things that were hidden in his own soul, was not that may be more important than any mere blind devotion to the past could be, so that really it were better that the dead should bury their dead while he followed the living? Did he ever ask himself this question, driven and flogged hither and thither as he was in that uncertain age, when at one moment it seemed as though we were about to come upon the very immortal gods in a sudden and strange burst of spring between two stretches of bleak winter, while at another the whole world seemed about to dash itself in agony and tears against the lonely tomb of Jesus? In the personality of Sigismondo rather than in any other man of his day I seem to discern, as I have said, that struggle which had come upon the world, a conflict between the old and the new, in which it was necessary there should be victor and vanquished, where no compromise was possible, no truce to be thought of for a moment. Certainly he desired the fairest and the noblest things, only what were the noblest and fairest after all?

Yes, it had come to just that. Everywhere one was questioning things; a new world seemed to be opening before one in which for the first time Man appeared, individual man, with all the world in himself; and in his own heart, as some said, the kingdom of heaven also.

But then, even though one might in some way understand,



Relief from the tomb of Amenemhat III, showing the king and his family.

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Bas. Relief from Tomb of the Ancestors of Sigismondo Malatesta

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or at any rate welcome, this new world with its gladness, its awakened spirit, its openness of heart—and indeed it is difficult for me to express exactly what all men are aware of nevertheless,—even though one might altogether embrace it, there were times when there awakened too in one's heart other desires and needs and brutalities that it was necessary to satisfy; ambition, for instance, that need not be ignoble; a certain love of power that, alas! so easily grows into tyranny; all those desires and dreams that man has harboured so long and that are not less insistent or powerful on that account: his life in the mountains with the beasts; the journeys over the weary miles of the desert, full of dreams, towards Jerusalem; the crimes at nightfall by the wayside; the glut and sacking of cities; the violation of women; the scarlet blood of young men; the torture agony and delight of the lives of the saints; the longing for women in barred cloisters before the frail and strangely symbolic images of Madonna; the weariness of the world; the terror of the grave.

How much I have sometimes asked myself, had those two tutors to answer for Pandolfo de' Mengardoni and Ugolino de' Pili da Forlì, whom Pandolfo Malatesta had procured for the education of Sigismondo and Domenico, in a certain disregard for others, for mere justice, a splendid, and yet in some way I cannot explain, really a disheartening egoism obvious enough certainly in the character of Sigismondo, that, remembering his enthusiasm for Philosophy and for Art, I cannot but think the result of some unfortunate bias his spirit must have received in early youth or the haunting dreams of that giant, the Past, who did not always sleep in his heart, and even though he wakened but seldom, ever slept uneasily. But indeed that egoism, so full of energy, and yet so narrowing, bearing in itself, as I think, the certainty of destruction, is characteristic enough of the

foremost men of our day, though not always, it may be, in so profound a fashion as in the life of Sigismondo. And something of the cruelty that marred his youth, and of the egoism that was at last to ruin him, may be found, I think, in two circumstances that happened about this time. For in the tumults that followed the death of Galeotto, Pandolfo de' Mengardoni was found among the rebels, and put to death; while Ugolino de' Pili suddenly disappeared, starved and tortured as some say, as Pope Pius later did not hesitate to assert, for no just cause, but for the pleasure of Sigismondo, who desired nothing better than the pain and humiliation of one who had been in authority over him. But those who have known Sigismondo's kindness and generosity to scholars may assure themselves that this man also was involved in some treason.¹

It was about this time too, while Sigismondo was but fifteen years old, that, hearing of his victories and of the treaty he had made with Pope Eugenius IV., himself a Venetian, rich but not noble, and knowing the friendship Venice professed for the lords of Rimini, whose city was set beside the same sea, Francesco Busone da Carmagnola, general of the Republic, offered him his little daughter in marriage, sending him as a present a fine horse together with a beautiful helmet of pure silver. And Sigismondo accepted both his offer and his gifts. It was the lord of Mantua who in great part had made this match, desiring, it may be, to bring Sigismondo definitely to the side of the Venetians against Milan, seeing in him perhaps a successor to Carmagnola; and from him Sigismondo received presents, among them a helmet and a horse not less beautiful than those Carmagnola had given him. The affair,

¹ Sanseverino's opinion is endorsed, among others, by Battaglini (*Basini Opera*, Rimini, 1744, vol. ii. 302), and apparently by Flavius Blondus of Rimini.

however, had gone no further, though Sigismondo had received a great part of the marriage portion, when in May 1432, the Consiglio dei Dieci suspecting Carmagnola of treason, falsely as I believe, beheaded him in the Piazza di S. Marco. Whether indeed this shameful death really influenced Sigismondo (perhaps for certain political reasons easy to understand) not to ally himself with a family accused of treason by Venice and disgraced before the world, and, not least, in the eyes of the Venetian Pope; or whether, being still young, he had no heart in a political match, desiring to wed with one whom he might love, I know not, but he repudiated the daughter of Carmagnola. And even here too, as I cannot but think, he acted unworthily, not in the repudiation, which it may well be was thrust upon him, but in refusing as he did to give back the marriage portion he had received in good faith from a family now ruined. Was it that he reminded himself that Carmagnola in other days had driven his father from Brescia? It is the only excuse I can find for one who in his earliest youth was so little generous to those who were in distress, and for no just cause, as I have said, but from fortune, so uncertain in that sort of life, as Sigismondo was to find later, when he too looked may be for a certain generosity in men and found none.

And indeed, in all that world of Sigismondo's youth, so bitter and so alert, so full of ambition, but one lord of them all had involved himself in no one's quarrel, but had stood alone neither for the Pope nor for his enemies—I mean the Marchese Nicolò d'Este, the dear friend of Carlo Malatesta. It was he who in this moment of crisis, not for Sigismondo alone, but for Italy, came to his assistance, and found a way for him out of his difficulties by the which he should offend neither Milan nor the Pope. Indeed, the times were grave enough. For the Council of Basel being assembled, and the

Pope eager against it; while Sigismund, King of the Romans, in some sort its would-be ambassador, like a Carnival King, was dragged by his ambition for the Imperial crown from Milan, where he had assumed the iron crown of Lombardy, while Duke Filippo insulted him, to Piacenza, and thence to Parma and Lucca, and at last to Siena, where he remained caged like a wild beast between the armies of the Florentines, the Venetians, and the Duke of Milan, who had deserted him, a new schism, not less dangerous than that which was scarcely healed, threatened the world, and chiefly Italy, the head and front thereof. In this moment of great need only the Marchese Nicolò d'Este stood firm, desiring above all things the peace of Italy, and at last, with the greatest tact, he arranged terms between the Pope and Sigismund, the Duke of Milan and the Venetians and Florentines, weary at last of war, so that the treaty was signed in Ferrara in April 1433. And at the same time he provided for the coronation of Sigismund in Rome, which happened in that same year on the 31st of May, being Whitsunday.

While engaged in these treaties Nicolò d'Este, not unmindful of his friendship for the Malatesti, and remembering, it may be, his own bastards, offered Sigismondo his daughter Ginevra in marriage; and Sigismondo agreed, thus betrothing himself to the sister of his brother's wife, and making sure the alliance of his family with the Lords of Ferrara. After the betrothal had been published by the Bishop in the Sala Verde of the Gattolo on the 22nd of February 1433, twenty days later Sigismondo set out for Ferrara, and on the 15th of March placed the ring on Madonna Ginevra's hand, though he delayed bringing her home to Rimini till later. And there followed fast on these festivities that good news for all Italy—to wit, the peace arranged by the Marchese Nicolò, and Sigismund, the Emperor, was as pleased as any.

Leaving Rome as Emperor, crowned, as he had desired, by the Pope before the high altar in S. Pietro, Sigismund, with the Duke of Bavaria, and among the Italian gentlemen who followed him Marsilio Carrarese and Brunoro della Scala, on their way northward, leaving Perugia, came by way of Urbino to Rimini, much to the delight of Sigismondo, who, thinking always of Cæsar, had three triumphal arches built in the Via Emilia, which passes through the city under the arch of Augustus, while he decked the streets with hangings and trophies. And there went out to meet the Emperor the Signori Sigismondo and Novello, with all the clergy in procession, to S. Godenzo. And after Messer Antonio degli Andarelli had praised him in a Latin Ode, the Signori offered him the Keys of the city; but he gave them back again with courteous thanks, and entered Rimini at last under a rich canopy, supported by the Bishop of the city, with Giovanni Malatesta di Sogliano, Count Nicolò Malatesta di Ghiaggiuolo, Count Francesco di Carpegna, the Count of Piagiano, Vanne de' Medici, Count of Valfenara, the Podestà, Carlo de' Lapi, the Cavaliere Marco degli Aguselli, Antonio da Montesecco, and Carlo da Monteboddo. And the Emperor went on horseback to the Gattolo, where he dined with his Barons, and after walked abroad in the Piazza, and later attended a splendid Festa in the Gattolo, where all those who out of respect had come to court danced before him, who, as he told the Pope, was a lover of women, and found ours of Rimini, as he said, not less beautiful than the Roman ladies.

Then Sigismund with his own hand, before this great company, knighted Sigismondo and Domenico his brother; and though I think indeed they did not covet this honour, since before long every wool-carder, money-lender, and baker's son will be dubbed knight, so eagerly does a blockhead nowadays bestride an old skinny nag and don a leather jerkin, taking

them where he finds them, so that there be knights of four-score who never struck a blow, and knights who keep shop and steal what they can in their leisure, decked with the favours of some farm wench, still the Emperor, merry with wine, meant it well enough; and the title which he never used harmed not Sigismondo, who needed not this honour to help him to a horse or a good sword, and had men's love and fear already, not by any German's leave, but for his own virtue, bravery, and force.¹

The day following, when the Emperor, with Signor Sigismondo and his guests, had heard Mass at S. Giuliano beyond the Marrechia, across the Bridge of Augustus, he set out in the company of the Signori towards Cesena, and coming to Villalta, a villa of the Lords of Sogliano, between Cesenatico and Cervia, in the place called Boscabella, he encamped till dawn. Then moving his army, for he had with him still some eight hundred of his own horse—though he had entered Italy with an escort of six hundred men of the Duke of Milan, but they had long since returned to Lombardy—when he was at the ford of Castiglione on the Savio he went towards Ravenna, not, however, before he had created as Count Palatine Guglielmo de' Maschi, who followed Malatesta Novello, for he with the Lord of Sogliano and the Count of Carpegna and his son Rinalduccio, the Podestà Vanne de' Medici and his kinsman Doctor Giacomo de' Roselli, had come thus far with him—to wit, to the boundary of the state, and thence on his departure they returned to Rimini.

That visit, so transitory and so splendid, remained in Sigismondo's mind for very many years after, confirming him in a love for all the antique grandeur of Rome, that certainly in the person of Sigismund of Luxembourg was fantastic and

¹ Clementini, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 304, says that the Emperor changed Sigismondo's name at the same time, for it had till then been Gismondo.





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*Sigismondo Malatesta kneeling before Sigismondo.
from a fresco by Piero della Francesca.*



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strange enough to please and fascinate a boy so imaginative, so likely to adorn the solemn greatness of old days, a little wearying, as, in my heart, I have sometimes thought they may have really been, till it assumed a modern air, and gaily passed before him like a pageant of autumn masquerading as spring, with all the joy and gaiety of one of those processions I have often seen winding through the streets of Florence in the days of Carnival, the girls and young men singing the songs of Signor Lorenzo; or in the streets of Rimini, for that matter, when the swallows come eastward and south over the sea on one of the first calm and halcyon days of February or March, and the whole world would sing in a moment of gladness between the long winter and the uncertain days of spring. Was it at this time that he decided to set Fame before him as his divinity, and exalted Glory to be, as it were, his patron saint? Certainly it was in his early youth, that he would devise these processions, a Triumph of Love or Fame may be, with their cars beautiful with the old gods—the old gods, who had suddenly been born again on a summer day in Rimini in the persons of Messer Giovanni or Madonna Giulia, or even as I have sometimes thought, in more sinister fashion, of Sigismondo himself, only with a certain mortal beauty about them, a little pensive too, as of a God who has looked on death, that I think was not observed by the many boisterously anxious to greet Messer Giovanni as Mars or Donna Giulia as Venus, her girdle unfastened, and her white body, like a flower burst from its green sheath, which the young men eyed a little shyly, flinging her kisses and roses till sundown.

Well, it was at some such pageant as this made for the Emperor that Sigismondo, desiring the apotheosis of Fame to be represented, some of the cars were to be devoted to this subject, and, turning over the great illuminated Petrarch in the Gattolo, he came upon the very thing—Trionfo della Fama,

a car in which Fame herself sat surrounded by angels blowing their long trumpets, and drawn by elephants trumpeting too, while the people strewed flowers to be crushed by their great clumsy feet.

And ever after he took this symbol of Fame, the elephant, for his device, had it indeed curiously wrought on his armour, on his helmet, on his bridles and saddles, that all might know he sought ever for Glory and had set his heart on an imperishable star.¹

In such thoughts as these, and in preparation too for the advent of Madonna Ginevra, his wife, to Rimini, in devising processions, beautiful pageants, and a real siege, the storming of a fortress, for her delight, the days passed after the departure of the Emperor; while Romagna and all Italy too enjoyed the new peace. And it was at this moment that, after many wanderings, I came to rest at Rimini.

But it was not for long after all that this fragile peace lasted. For the Emperor was scarcely out of Italy when the Duke of Milan, more furious than ever with the Pope, since Pope and Emperor were friends, plotted with the Colonna and their many adherents in and around Rome to do the Church some harm. Even Fortebraccio, though he had been in the pay of Eugenius, being gained by the Duke with presents and promises, had begun to fight near Rome with the bands who served the Pope, capturing Ponte Molle as early as August; while Francesco Sforza, won over by the Duke, who promised him his bastard Bianca in marriage, seized the March; and the Duke was supported in these things by the Council at Basle. All this brought confusion into Romagna, and Sigismondo with Novello, thinking to make all sure, fortified Cervia, so that it might not fall into the

¹ It is well to have Sanseverino's statement on this vexed question, for the suggestions that have been made as to whence Sigismondo had his device are both curious and far-fetched.

hands of the Duke ; but the Pope thought that they too were among his enemies.

In the midst of this uncertainty Sigismondo went to Ferrara to claim Madonna Ginevra, his wife, and to ask counsel of his father-in-law, Nicolò d'Este, who advised him, as was his manner, to remain neutral in this quarrel, an hard saying to one like Signor Sigismondo. Nevertheless, he determined to send an ambassador to Rome to explain the affair of Cervia to the Pope, and he chose me for this honour ; yet because he loved me he would not let me depart until his return, and those Festivities, Triumphs, and Tournaments over which he had spent so much thought for the delight of Madonna Ginevra were done with, and by this you may see what a boy he was still, in that he would rather pleasure a friend than secure himself.

And indeed I remember well enough those days he was absent, for to me even then some light seemed wanting in the sun, and certainly the year broke stormily. How often at his command did I question the stars on his behalf, but they promised only disaster, and for this cause, and because I think this science a foolish and even an evil thing, beautiful though it be doubtless, I deceived him ; yet they by chance spoke truth and I lies. But all these things I have kept in my heart, nor shall I say more now concerning them.

It was the seventh day of February when he entered Rimini with Madonna Ginevra, radiant and a little weary from the journey with him. And Carlo Malatesta of Pesaro with his wife, Madonna Vittoria Colonna, were there to greet him. In truth I knew not I had missed him so much till, later than had been expected, I saw him enter the city past S. Giuliano, and watched the sunset strike his banners for the first time, as the procession halted on the Ponte d'Augusto, where he waited to show Madonna Ginevra, sleepily smiling, that old Roman bridge he loved so well. Thence he led her into the Gattolo, kissing her eagerly

enough as he lifted her over the threshold between the great grim bastions of the drawbridge. And she, white as a flower, layed her hands on the silver of his cuirass, and kissed him again before the people. So he brought her home. Yet indeed I have seen him kiss as eagerly many another maid in Rimini, and certainly there were tears in the eyes of many women who looked on him then, but whether this were grief, envy, or the mere sentiment so easily roused in women at all times, especially at marriages, births, funerals, and so forth, I know not; for he loved women as he loved Art, furiously and to his undoing, as I shall relate.

The whole city was abroad again at dawn, which broke sharp and wintry, promising a day of sun. And indeed that sunless dawn, that laid the dew thick on the bright armour, and drooped the flags, and filled the plain with mist, grew later into a perfect day— one of those days, not so uncommon after all in February, when spring seems to have come already, and all happiness with her. Was it really so, or was it just in my heart that these things were, for that Sigismondo had returned, bringing his wife with him?

Even on the evening before, a little shyly may be, as though in promise of to-morrow, through the streets at sunset that song had stolen which I have so loved (and which Signor Lorenzo later added to and polished), sung by the young men, being borne at last across the bridge of Augustus in a sort of triumphal chorus:

“ Quant'è bella giovinezza
Che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol esser lieto: sia—
Di doman non c'è certezza.”¹

¹ “ How beautiful is youth,
That yet flees away always!
He who wishes to be merry, let him be merry,
Of to-morrow there is no certainty.”

It may well be that this verse is founded on a folk song, but Sanseverino has inadvertently used Lorenzo's poem.

And with the morning, so shy and so fair, that chorus had grown into an ordered and yet wild sort of pageant, a Trionfo as we say, in honour of the occasion, and for all its contrivance had arranged somehow to keep still about it a certain wildness, something of the wild flowers themselves, being really almost a natural growth, a song of youth. For amid the crowds of holiday folk that thronged the city for the three days' Festa and Tournament, during which all the shops of the merchants were shut, and the Court of the Gattolo was thrown open that all who belonged to the state and those strangers who were come to the city might be served with food, there moved the great car of Bacchus and Ariadne, where Bacchus himself stood with his leopard skin round him—yes, in the very likeness of the statue that not so long ago some peasant had turned up with his plough in the fields and brought to Sigismondo; while Ariadne herself, white and beautiful, lay in his arms, her great serious eyes laughing now at her friends, her golden hair tumbling on her shoulders, and her wine-coloured dress with the gaily slashed sleeves showing the starched linen, and the fantastically arranged skirt, purfled and caught up in multitudes of tiny pleats under the breasts by a silk band worked in curiously coloured needlework with Pans and I know not what strange Gods. A crowd of boys dressed as fauns and satyrs followed, just a delightful throng of tiny children, really enjoying themselves in the fine weather, bearing in their hands olive boughs and myrtles; while beside the car came the maidens dressed in green, splashed with crimson, and worked in curious devices, in many harmonious colours; and before marched the young men, some with long trumpets, some with pan-pipes, some with flowers; and in front of them walked a maid, bearing a gold lyre, and beside her a youth holding a banner decked with olive boughs.

But what chiefly delighted the crowd after all was the

grotesque figure of Silenus, who followed the car sitting astride an ass, between the wine skins, which with much rude and yet expressive pantomime he would lift and drink from, continually spilling the wine over his hairy body, so that it dripped to the ground, making the way crimson. In one hand he carried a great blown bladder, with which he belaboured the ass and such of the crowd as came within reach, amid much joking and shouting, which centred in Midas, that king who was a very ass.

After all, how different was this Ariadne in her dainty clothes from any thought the Greeks ever had of her, and yet something that I seem to have found in every recollection of what I have heard or read of that old splendid life had certainly been caught in that song that the young men were singing in chorus with so much "gusto," while the maidens walked beside them:

"Quant'è bella giovinezza
Che si fugge tuttavia!
Chi vuol esser lieto: sia—
Di doman non c'è certezza." ¹

And indeed the whole city took up the words; and then, the signal being given, far away in front a little Pan, (it was in fact, a little lad of my acquaintance, whom I had taught to pipe the words) began the Trionfo:

"Quest'è Bacco e Arianna
Belli e l'un dell'altro ardenti: ²

¹ "How beautiful is youth,
That yet flees away always!
He who wishes to be merry, let him be merry,
Of to-morrow there is no certainty."

² "This is Bacchus and Ariadne,
Lovely and loving the one the other."

Perchè 'l tempo fugge e 'nganna
Sempre insieme stan contenti." ¹

Then the Pans, fauns, nymphs, and dryads who followed
after answered in chorus :

" Queste ninfe e altre genti
Sono allegre tuttavia.
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
Di doman non c'è certezza." ²

And the satyrs who drew the car answered them :

" Questi lieti satiretti
Delle ninfe innamorati
Per caverne e per boschetti
Han lor posto cento aguati :
Or da Bacco riscaldati,
Ballon saltan tuttavia.
Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
Di doman non c'è certezza." ³

And the nymphs and dryads replied :

" Queste ninfe hanno anco caro
Da loro essere ingannate : ⁴

¹ Since time flies and is a cheat
They remain ever together and are happy."

² " These nymphs and other folk
Are always gay.
Who wishes to be merry, let him be merry,
Of to-morrow there is no certainty."

³ " These merry little satyrs
Amorous of the nymphs,
In the caverns and the woods
Have laid a hundred snares for them ;
Now warmed by Bacchus
They dance and sing always.
Who wishes to be merry, etc."

⁴ " And these nymphs are glad
To be by them beguiled :

Non puon far a Amor riparo
 Se non genti rozze e 'ngrate :
 Ora insieme mescolate
 Fanno festa tuttavia.
 Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
 Di doman non c'è certezza." ¹

Then Silenus raised his rough voice :

" Questa soma che vien dreto
 Sopra l'asino, è Sileno :
 Così vecchio è ebbro e lieto,
 Già di carne e d'anni pieno :
 Se non può star ritto, almeno
 Ride e gode tuttavia.
 Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
 Di doman non c'è certezza." ²

Then followed the weary, silly voice of Midas, amid the
 laughter of the people :

" Mida vien dopo costoro :
 Ciò che tocca, ora diventa.
 E che giova aver tesoro,
 Poichè l'uom non si contenta ?" ³

¹ For one cannot resist love
 Unless one be rough and unpleasing :
 Now all mingled together
 Are making feast always.
 Who wishes to be merry, etc."

² " This burden which comes after
 On the ass is Silenus :
 He is drunken and merry though he is old,
 Very fat and full of years :
 If he cannot stand, at least
 He is laughing and rejoicing always.
 Who wishes to be merry, etc."

³ " Midas comes after these :
 Whatever he touches turns to gold.
 But what avail to have treasure,
 Since man is never satisfied ?

Che dolcezza vuoi che senta
 Chi ha sete tuttavia ?
 Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
 Di doman non c'è certezza." ¹

As though impatient of his eunuch's voice, all the people
 of the procession sang in chorus :

" Ciascun apra ben gli orecchi :
 Di doman nessun si paschi ;
 Oggi siam, giovani e vecchi,
 Lieti ognun, femmine e maschi ;
 Ogni tristo pensier caschi ;
 Facciam festa tuttavia.
 Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
 Di doman non c'è certezza.

Donne e giovanetti amanti,
 Viva Bacco e viva Amore !
 Ciascun suoni, balli e canti !
 Arda di dolcezza il core !
 Non fatica, non dolore !
 Quel c'ha esser, convien sia.
 Chi vuol esser lieto, sia :
 Di doman non c'è certezza
 Quant'è bella giovinezza
 Che si fugge tuttavia." ²

¹ What sweetness may he feel
 Who is always thirsty?
 Who wishes to be merry, etc."

² " Let each open wide his ears :
 On to-morrow let no one count ;
 To-day we are, young and old,
 All joyful, men and women.
 Let us put away sadness.
 Let us make Festa always.
 Who wishes to be merry, etc."
 Youths and maidens, lovers
 Long live Bacchus and long live love !
 Let all make a noise and dance and sing !
 Let the heart burn for sweetness !
 Let there be no toil nor sorrow !
 What must be—let it be.
 Who wishes to be merry, etc."

And at last they came to the Gattolo, and wheeling round about, with Signor Sigismondo and Madonna Ginevra following, with their guard and the maidens and women of Ginevra, they proceeded to the Piazza of the Forum, where were built those castles of wood that were to be taken by storm to show the valour of the youth of Rimini to Sigismondo. Then the whole day seemed to lose itself in noise, nor was it possible for me to speak with Sigismondo. Therefore I wandered down to the seashore, quite deserted now and, in the woods sought, as of old—well, Bacchus and Ariadne, and found not them indeed, but other gods, whose presence has continually brought me comfort. Thus on the sand where the sea beat softly, while the silver moon rode over the waters crimson in the sunset, I too was singing in my heart the words which rang through the city :

“ Quant'è bella giovinezza
Che si fugge tuttavia.”

When I returned to Rimini still, now and then, I caught the words coming to me in the twilight down the narrow ways, and in spite of the boisterous gaiety, that had become a little rude and rough, in the flare of the torches and lamps in the darkest ways and in the Piazza, a sort of foreboding came to me that, almost in indignation, I tried to shake off, in vain. Who was I to be sorry at the Festa of my Lord? Yet as I went homeward through the quieter ways to avoid the crowds thoughtlessly at play in their fashion, in the shadow of a church a woman, very young still, came to me, and, in tears, asked me to bring her to Sigismondo; but I would not, and went my way. What had I then to do with his playthings? and a broken plaything should not be produced on his Festa.

Then as I turned the last corner I heard one cry out ; and again it was a woman, but she said, laughing :

“ Chi vuol esser lieto, sia,”

as she fled from the outstretched hands of one who pursued her, entreating :

“ Di doman non c'è certezza.”

And for this cause on his Festa I came home sorrowful.


V

It was into a sort of Pandemonium that I came when on a morning in April I entered Rome at last as Sigismondo's ambassador, after a journey full of uneasiness, to find the city blocked by the armies of Fortebraccio and Nicolò Piccinino, the captains of the Duke of Milan. Traversing those noisy streets full of people, who seemed like brigands, I learned that though the Pope had won over Sforza by giving him the vicariate of the March of Ancona, of which he had possessed himself, that general had been forced to fall back, or at any rate had done so, before the armies of Milan, leaving the City to its fate; while the Pope himself, seeing the fierceness and rage and disorder of the people, had taken refuge in S. Maria in Trastevere. It was there with the rest of Rome I betook myself daily, trying in vain for an audience, for the Pope would see no one; and indeed, had he seen all who waited on him at that time, he would but have lost his time, for the Romans were his enemies, ready to sacrifice him to the Duke or the Council if thereby they might escape the siege.

Seeing then that, for the moment at any rate, it was useless for me to wait upon him (for my credentials were not examined, nor could I even approach the church), and expecting some disaster from day to day, I wandered about the city, thinking always of old days, sorry in my heart for the misery that had befallen my country, longing for the pacification of Italy.

I remember one evening, crossing the Tiber by the Ponte S. Angelo, going sadly through the deserted city (for indeed

the whole populace seemed to be gathered in Trastevere), past the Pantheon, skirting the Quirinal hill, climbing at last up to the Baths of Diocletian, and, after some difficulty, finding my way up above their mighty and ruined vaults, where the birds had just built their nests; lying there, in the stillness and silence among the sweet-smelling herbs and bushes and a thousand wild flowers, about an hour before sunset I looked over Rome. Ah! how can I ever tell of the emotions that filled my heart at the sight of the eternal city that, like a beautiful woman clothed in rags, lay under the feet of the ignorant multitude? It was a city of monstrous ruins that I saw, ruins which have lost their meaning, Temples, Palaces, and Tombs ruined, ruined, ruined. The delicate marbles carved with inscriptions, the precious bas-reliefs and statues of the gods, the beautiful pillars and triumphal arches, the spoil and glory of more than a thousand years, have been burned with fire to make lime for the hovels of the populace, the castles of barbarian nobles, the churches of friars. My eyes filled with tears, and for long I could not refrain from weeping. For they have used the ruins as quarries; even the walls have not been spared, and have fallen not from decay, but by destruction. Here and there around me in those Baths of Diocletian there were columns of ivory-coloured marble and porphyry; wandering, on the day before, along the Appian Way, I had come upon the tomb of Caecilia Metella, as yet unspoiled, while in the Forum the Temple of Concord was still standing. But of these things the Roman knew nothing, he had forgotten the past, and if he thought of Rome it was only as a fabulous city; for in looking at the Coliseum or the Palaces of the Cæsars he dreamed they were the works of fiends under the will of the magician Virgil, and to him Zeus was an idol and Aphrodite a witch or a strumpet, and Apollo a devil singing to his kind all through a summer's day. And having driven out the gods, they have



left him to his Crucified. Yet Pico, my friend, who in his ever young and serene heart has found room for Jesus beside Apollo, has rebuked me often enough for words like these, and in his youth and enthusiasm and beauty I have seemed to foresee, as it were, Italy new-born. But it was not so then.

As I lay among the flowers that had run among the tombs and ruins of Rome on that April evening, in my heart there was sorrow and bitterness. These barbarians, who would hound a Pope to death, they think not of Evander, of Romulus, or Cæsar. Yet I, Sanseverino, born in the Kingdom, of no great city, the son of poor people, I have seen the place where Evander's palace stood, and in a shady nook, cool and noiseless, I have known by the beating of my heart that here Cacus dwelt beside the Tiber. Ah! in that sunset long ago what ghosts rose before me out of the lonely majesty of the Campagna, and I asked myself, in the very words of Petrarch, where can the Empire of the world be found except in Rome? And again, looking on the city, I wept for a long time.

Then in the strange and burning light of the sunset, that seemed to consume Rome as in an immense conflagration, while from all this city of ruins huge columns of dust rose in the evening and passed over the city into the Campagna, I saw those heroic spirits which from the foundation of the city have created and upheld the Roman right to government and dominion. In the loneliness of dawn, under a sky charged with marvels, Romulus sat, tearless, a lonely king in the desert on the banks of the tawny Tiber, beside the body of Remus, whom he had slain; and at last, in the silence, I thought I heard him weeping. Then I saw the city that he had founded upon the seven hills, and out of its gates it spewed an angry and hideous multitude of men, who seemed to be disputing; then, their

quarrel ended, as I thought, they re-entered the city, and flung to the gates, and there was left alone one man, and in his hand was a broken crown, and by the pride and cruelty of his countenance I knew it was Tarquinius, the last of the Kings. And I looked again, and I saw the Capitol, and one with a pale and beautiful face passionately harangued the multitude, who flung themselves around his feet, thrusting their fists into the air as though making an oath; but suddenly in my vision they melted away into the night, and when it was dawn there on the steps I saw the body of him who was the orator, and in his breast was a dagger, and because a woman with white hair, noble and gracious, wept over him, and one like to him stood beside her, I knew I had seen Tiberius Gracchus, the Tribune of the people. When I looked again the city was in tumult, and at the foot of the hill of the Emperors a man stood dressed like a soldier, and beside the Capitol stood another like to him, yet fiercer and more terrible, and the people fled from one to the other, and as they passed to and fro they left always at the feet of both a growing heap of dead; and in the noise and tumult I could distinguish nothing, till suddenly I heard a thunder as of beaten brass, and I saw one like to a god, who struck on the brazen gates of the city with a great sword as though to hew them in pieces, and they were opened wide. Then on the Sacred Way I saw upreared a mighty standard crusted with gems and gold and emblazoned with an everlasting name, and over the sound of trumpets and clarions and the clamour of sonorous metal I heard the word "Cæsar" torn from the universal throat of the city, and I knew that the deliverer had come. But one coming suddenly behind him, though he saw him not, for his eyes were set on the Capitol, struck him with his dagger, and he fell; and there was silence in all the city, and night came down out of her original chaos. And after a time, hurrying through the night,


came numberless forms, some noble and beautiful, but none like to him who fell; some abject, some rude and clothed in barbaric splendour, some weak and tottering under the weight of the immense casque of iron and of gold that all alike wore, and at last a pale priest, surrounded by slaves singing in procession, bearing a crucifix, and on his head was a triple crown of iron and gold and ivory. Then in the dim light of another dawn I saw the city once more full of tumult and noise and disputing, and I saw one with an eager and passionate face worn by dreams standing on the Capitol, and one by one he assumed six crowns of ivy, myrtle, laurel, oak, olive, and silver, and in his right hand were the keys of Peter, and in his left the insignia of Rome; but the crowns withered away, and he fell to weeping. And I, awakening out of the vision, saw in the burning afterglow of sunset the city of Rome that had filled my dream, the Rome of to-day, a city of ruins, round which already the wolves were howling. Then for a long time I sat in silence, till the night had filled the city, and I gathered my cloak round me, for it was chill and the dew was falling, and I went back to my house. And for many days I lay there burning with fever, which they told me I had caught among the ruins.

When I was cured of this sickness it was one of the last days of May, and again I went to S. Maria in Trastevere to try to see the Pope, and this time, by the kindness of one of his attendants whom I had known when I was a boy, I was successful, though the city was full of tumult. He received me with much kindness, and listened to my words on behalf of Sigismondo, and indeed professed much affection and admiration for him. But indeed he was sick with anxiety and fear, not knowing what was to become of him.

And, as it happened, I was the last man in Rome to speak with him for many years, for on the following day a crowd

besieged the church, demanding to see the Pope, who sent his nephew, Cardinal Francesco Correr, to speak with them, but he could not agree to their demands. Then that old cry, the People and Liberty, sounded through the city; and they stormed the Capitol, dreaming of a republic demanding at last that S. Angelo and the Castello of Ostia should be given them, and the Cardinal too, as a hostage; and again, that the Pope should take up his residence in the palace of the Colonna by SS. Apostoli. And when he refused they threatened to make him prisoner.

And it happened that on 4th June, at midday, I was walking in the shade under the trees on the Aventine Hill, for there was there a monastery of Benedictines full of learned men. Hearing a tumult, and the shouting of a great multitude, I ran in haste towards the Marmorata, wondering what this might be. On the far bank I saw what indeed must have been half the population of the city running beside the river, some hurling huge stones, some shooting arrows, all cursing and spitting with rage at a small and rickety boat which, propelled by rowers, hurried down the mid-stream. Then I became aware, for in the tumult I heard only the name of Eugenius, that it was the Pope, who thus sought to escape from the city, that indeed he was there in that tiny boat covered by a shield. So I too began to run, following to see the end, for already the boat was half full of stones and water, and many arrows had pierced the planks. Presently, as I ran, I saw beyond the Church of S. Paolo another boat, that the Romans, running before, had launched full of armed men; but he who steered the Pope held on his way, turning aside no whit for this other, which, being old, and half sinking from the weight of men, at the last moment turned aside, so that the Pope shot by into safety. And, as I heard later, this escape had been long planned, but for many days no one could be found



to undertake it, till a pirate, coming to anchor in Ostia, agreed to try; and indeed it was he who steered so fearlessly.

And the Pope, coming to Ostia at last, went on board his ship, as we heard, and set sail for Pisa, where he came safely, going thence to Florence, where, as ever, he was received most courteously.

VI

Now, when I returned to Rimini with this news, Sigismondo determined to set out immediately for Ferrara, to take advice of his father-in-law, the Marchese Nicolò d'Este, who, as ever, had kept himself without the quarrel betwixt Milan and the Pope, and from the countless minor hatreds too, that circled round this greater. For this cause it was to Sigismondo's advantage to ask his advice and to be related to him. And he, as he was wont to do, spoke cautiously, advising Sigismondo to devote himself to the protection of his dominions, the which he did. Therefore, in spite of the treason of Count Francesco Sforza, who, though he was on the Pope's side, did not wish to make a real enemy of the Duke, the year passed quietly at Rimini, disturbed from time to time, it is true, by dreadful news, such as the murder of the family of the Varani, Lords of Camarino, in the church of S. Domenico in that city, who were killed to a man, save one small child, Giulio Cesare by name—and who knows what virtue lay therein—who was saved by his aunt, for she hid him in a truss of hay, and brought him safely to Foligno, placing him under the protection of the Trinci; not for long, however, for they too were massacred soon after, so that she fled to Fabriano, where, on Ascension Day, in the following year, the same fate befell the Chiavistelli, Lords of that city. Indeed, the whole country was in a state of restlessness and conspiracy, since the only legitimate Lord was a fugitive in Florence, and Sforza, Piccinino, and the rest, with all Italy betting on the result, seemed to be wandering at large with their bands, not so much in the cause of

Milan or the Pope as for other reasons—the founding of a Lordship, for instance, or the sacking of a city.

In the meantime, as we heard, the affairs of the Pope not in Italy alone were going from bad to worse. And if this were so, it was the fault of Eugenius himself. Violent and obstinate, as I have said, he had made all those whom in Italy he might easily have conciliated his foes, and it was these who gave strength to the Council at Basle, which he knew not how to govern or to dismiss. Really a fugitive in Florence, though, as ever, the Florentines received him graciously, he had gone to that city at a moment very unfortunate for the furtherance of his plans, since there too men were divided in their allegiance. For the old balance between the populace and the aristocracy was about to be destroyed, and for the moment Messer Rinaldo degli Albizzi, he who loved Carlo Malatesta, and sent Cosimo de' Medici into exile, was in power. Only for a moment, as it proved, for in September 1434, the new magistrates wishing to recall Cosimo, Rinaldo, with some eight hundred armed men, had barricaded the Palace of the Podestà, hoping thus to win the city. In this tumult, seeing that his own affairs were not like to prosper, Eugenius offered himself as a mediator. Therefore he sent to Rinaldo, Vitelleschi, that soldier who was even then Bishop of Recanati, and he, by what means I know not, persuaded him to come to the Pope by night at S. Maria Novella. Now, what passed between them no man knows; but at dawn Rinaldo dismissed his army, remaining himself with the Pope. And his enemies, seeing their moment was come, went to Eugenius, and thanked him, thus, as some have thought, surprising him into an abandonment of Rinaldo. However this may be, early in October, the recall of Cosimo was decreed, and Rinaldo with his son was sent into exile. It is said that the Pope ventured to excuse himself, protesting his honesty in the affair. But, as I have heard, Rinaldo answered him: "Holy Father, how

can I wonder at my ruin? Did I not believe that you who have been thrown out of your own country could keep me in mine? He is a blind man without a guide who trusts the word of a priest." It was thus the Medici gained possession of Florence.

Certainly towards the end of the year things began to look better for the Pope, in Rome at any rate. For Vitelleschi took possession of the city, and put many of the popular party to death; but the Pope remained in Florence, renewing later with Venice the league against the Duke of Milan; and they appointed as their general Francesco Sforza, and sent him southward against Fortebraccio, who, in the pay of the Duke, lurked around Rome.

But if the affairs of the Pope seemed none so bad in Rome and the Romagna, in the Kingdom they looked bad enough. For Louis of Anjou, dying in November 1434, the King of Aragon began to bestir himself, for he had been adopted by the Queen Giovanna II., who would now have none of him, favouring, as she did, René, Count of Provence, brother of Louis. It was to him in her will she left the kingdom when she died, not long after, in February 1435; but the Pope, deeming that crown tributary to the Holy See, appointed Vitelleschi as legate to the Kingdom, raising him for this cause to the Patriarchate of Alexandria; but Aragon heeded him not.

It was in the midst of all this unrest that the Marchese Nicolò d'Este betrothed his son Leonello to Margherita Gonzaga of Mantua, and in the new year, 1435, Sigismondo with Madonna Ginevra went to Ferrara to greet them, returning to Rimini on the 17th of February. And partly on the advice of the Marchese, and partly because his heart jumped that way, and he was tired of waiting idle while Sforza carved a dukedom for himself and Piccinino sought a lordship, and partly, again, because Sforza had told him

how welcome he would be, he went to Florence, taking with him Messer Pier Giovanni de' Brugnoli as his secretary, and me too as his orator, chiefly, as I think, because I had seen the Pope in Rome.

The opening stage of our journey brought us along the Æmilian Way in golden weather as it happened, for the pleasant springtime had begun, and around Rimini gay were all the hills, already covered with flowers, the trees clothed with leaves, and the olive gardens green with crops and scattered with poppies. The aspect of this country, full of signs of the sea—the wind-blown trees, the frailness of the grass—with here and there hills gently rising covered with vineyards, or ploughed for crops and already green, is sweet and lovely; the valleys too between them are lively with eternal waters, the lovely songs of streams; and even the great plain itself seemed to be joyful in the spring.

Through the woods we went, leaving the highway from time to time, for the sun was hot and the way through the pines sometimes the shorter, and there the birds were singing most sweetly. Ah! how can I tell my delight after the long winter in Rimini?

Sometimes as we went we came upon a man ploughing, or a cart halted at the wayside in the shadow of a pine-tree, or in the villages a company of children playing beside the way; and everywhere signs of that old Rome we have so loved, in the strength and persistence of the Way, its straightness and breadth, while here and there a ruined column told of some ancient or splendid thing.

It was beside one of these that I, lingering a little in the rear, found the company halted, and Sigismondo standing in his stirrups reading the inscription, a decree of the Roman Senate threatening to punish any who should without authority trespass into Italy beyond the Rubicon; and from this we learned that we had crossed that stream unknowing,

and, without a thought of Cæsar (save that the road, an eternal monument, had continually reminded us of him and of Augustus), we came really into Cisalpine Gaul, leaving Italy behind us.

At midday we halted beside a spring which gushed out most limpidly under the dark green leaves of the wild ivy and vines, and Sigismondo ordered dinner to be served there by the roadside; for indeed the magic of spring had touched him also, and, as he declared to me, a house was but a poor substitute for a green bank and the blue sky, and flutes but feeble music beside the noise of waters. And just here the stream gushed out between the rocks so generously that four millstones would have required no more. The brook which made so delicious a music presently spread out its waters into a broad lake, no deeper than a man, clear as crystal, cold and sweet, so that one might see the pebbles shining at the bottom. Above this spring we dined, drinking draughts of the fresh water, and though we had wine we touched it not, for the coldness of the water was pleasant after the journey of the morning. Presently many gathered from the village hard by to look at our cavalcade, which was as splendid as might be, and to these we gave food and wine. And some of them in return, to gratify Sigismondo, entered the stream, and, moving against the current, began to fish; while Sigismondo moved along the bank watching them, for there were meadows there and fields. At every capture, and they were not few, a shout was raised, and this continuing some time, as we prepared to continue our journey they brought the trout to us, for the stream produced nothing else, and gave them to the servants.

So we went that day and the next, coming to the mountains in the same golden weather, that held all through our journey. And after the first day's climbing, very weary, we came in the twilight to a great monastery as we thought,

but it proved to be but the ruins of one, in which certainly many monks must once have sung divine praises; but now crows kept watch and doves, and now and again I heard the screech-owl intone its lament, like a funeral song. Around lay woods of chestnuts. How can I tell of the silence of such a place, of its weirdness and strange, haunting, not quite reasonable, beauty? In a moment I seemed to be back in Germany again, to be moving in the cold, faint, mysterious light of that wild country, where the churches are full of strange voices; and angels, ambiguous beings, good or evil I know not, seem to whisper from the belfries and the great invisible roofs, that are upheld, as it were, by the branches of trees turned to stone, where the sun never penetrates. There we slept, in the nave of the church, not without setting watch.


Next morning early we went on our way again, and, crossing the mountains, came at last, without any adventure, into the valley of Arno at sunset, where also are woods, natural or formed by art; nor is there a hillock on which the Florentines have not built splendid suburban villas and estates—here a noble monastery inhabited by holy men, there the homes of citizens. And as it happened we came to Florence itself after the gates were shut, so that we slept that night at the great inn outside the Porta S. Gallo, very gay and full of mountebanks, for the people seem to resort there for all sorts of amusements.

On the following day I made my way through the city, in which, as it seems now, I am to spend my last years, past the old convent of S. Marco, that was rebuilt by our Michelozzo some years later, past the great new house of the Medici to the Duomo, whose dome was just finished, still wanting the lantern, but was even so the wonder of the world, and after pausing to consider this miracle I came at last to S. Maria Novella, where after a time I was brought

to the Pope, who welcomed me, and asked many things concerning Sigismondo, whom he desired to see most eagerly. And there too I met many of the Medici house, who when they learned that the Lord of Rimini was lodged in an inn, insisted on returning with me to that place, for they swore no house but their own should shelter so fine a soldier. And Sigismondo when he heard it agreed to go with them and to accept of their hospitality while he stayed in Florence.

In those days it was the custom, but not now, for the Republics to take into their pay certain captains, Condottieri as they were called, who having made themselves masters of a band of soldiers, and being famous and renowned for their victories, fought in what cause pleased them or paid them best, and such were Francesco Sforza and Piccinino Fortebraccio, Gattemalata, Carmagnola, Colleone, and in truth Pandolfo and Carlo Malatesta. Therefore Sigismondo, in taking service with the Pope, was but following in the footsteps of his ancestors, and since he had set Glory before him as his reward there seemed no better way than this of winning it. But for the moment certainly, in the company of Cosimo de' Medici and his friends, he was more than willing to leave to Messer Pier Giovanni, his secretary, and to Cardinal Francesco Correr, the Pope's nephew, the arrangement and negotiations of the terms of his service, forgetful of his ambition in his curiosity to gaze upon a city so famous and so invincible, a city of flowers too, even at that time, when in the most unlikely places the first roses of the year seemed to have blossomed, as it were, for his coming.

There were other surprises too in the fierce old city that seemed to Sigismondo to have assumed every superiority, to be beautiful naturally almost and without contrivance, in such a natural thing as the Campanile for instance, built by Messer Giotto Bondone, which towered there beside the Duomo really like a lily, with all the airy lightness and ease and



unconscious loveliness of the Flower this city had chosen to wear on its shield. Why had Rimini nothing to compare with such a thing as that? And again, how rude our old city seemed, almost a mere fortress, a mere stronghold of barbarians, beside this lovely and surprising place, where a work so modern, so full of new thoughts, as the church of S. Lorenzo, just then being built by these Medici and other families of the city, their famous architect, Messer Filippo Brunelleschi, making the design for them, could spring up without exciting too much enthusiasm after all; men thinking such wonders natural enough it seemed. And indeed all men's thoughts seemed bent on making the city beautiful, in building fine Palaces and Churches, or in seeking the best painters and sculptors to decorate them. And yet these Medici, who were foremost in all such work, who were the friends of philosophers and artists, what were they but tradesmen after all? Yet indeed they were courtly enough, full of kindness too; one might even get a hint now and then from them as to the best and most gentle modern way of approaching a lady, or wearing a doublet, or, surprising as it might seem, in manners generally, a certain easiness and self-control that should be surely the right of birth, that was difficult enough to assume at any rate, especially when one was surrounded by strange and curious things.

It was in those days, so full of animation, really new for Sigismondo, that I watched him grow from a naïve and passionate country boy, for indeed he was little more than a boy, into a polished and most courteous Lord, the strange, hard beauty of his face, cruel, delicate, and yet strong, brought out to the full by the fine linen and clothes necessary for life in such a city, and lighted up by the enthusiasm and excitement with which he would talk with Cosimo himself, or Messer Leon Battista Alberti, just then the chief ornament of what was a court in all but name.

And certainly those whom Sigismondo met in Florence at this time influenced him deeply, so that it was from this visit sprang his dreams, for instance, of rebuilding Rimini, which later came so near to success and caused so much wonder, enthusiasm, and hatred too. For he found in the house of Cosimo not soldiers and statesmen alone among a brilliant and, for the most part, frivolous crowd of young men and women, but scholars and artists also—to wit, Messer Lorenzo Ghiberti, who as a young man had painted in the Gattolo of the Malatesta in fresco, just then busy with his memoirs; Frate Filippo Lippi too, a delightful companion, whose nights were a mystery, whose days, as he would proclaim, were a long and impassioned labour; and above all Messer Leon Battista Alberti.

It was in the company of this last, a man of noble family, but a bastard, that much of Sigismondo's time was spent, Messer Battista having a particular liking for him for his naïve and simple country ways, I think, and for his fearlessness and strength. And with him Sigismondo talked of many things: of his ambition, which was boundless; of his dreams for Rimini, that was to be a city of palaces and fortresses in the new manner; of war and arms and the art of government; of sovereign remedies against fatigues and wounds; of swords and engines of war; of difficult feats of engineering; of the taking and destroying of castles, and of the building of them too; of the beauty and strength of horses and their swiftness; of hunting and of dogs; of women and the stars; of love, lust, and death—those three agonies for which there is no remedy; of family life, of which Messer Leon Battista was so hopeful, in which he was to be so unfortunate; of Art and painting and sculpture, and of the learning of Petrarch and Boccaccio; and he promised to show Sigismondo the house of the latter in the village of Corbignano, the which he did, and his discourse there led me first to think of these writers rather as men who

had given us back the dead than as poets or novelists themselves.

Then in the company of his new friends, following Cosimo de' Medici, Sigismondo would ride out early for a day's hunting, or in this very villa, where I am now writing of him, they would pass the day with certain fair ladies, talking doubtless of many fine and serious things, not in the eager and yet languid way, a little hysterical as I have thought, and apt, as I have seen, to degenerate into a fantastic sort of love-making over the books of Plato, which is now the custom, but in the simpler way that was the fashion in Cosimo's time, that I myself, being old-fashioned I suppose, must always prefer, though whether it were really more serious than our later manner I know not after all.

And then, as though to crown these days, certainly not of idleness, to give them really a serious meaning, and to weight one so eager for life with a real sense of responsibility, he was given a part in that gamble for power that behind all the glamour and beauty of a city like this was being played so ruthlessly, but, as I have sometimes thought, without any real knowledge of what was at stake. How splendid seemed that ceremony in which, with all the city as witness, he took his oath of allegiance to the Pope and swore to serve him well and faithfully!

It was one of the last days of March when, riding alone, wearing the silver helmet of Carmagnola, his companions following, a gay company fluttering with banners, Sigismondo went in state through the hot streets before the whole city to receive the Pope's investiture in the presence of Cosimo de' Medici, the Venetian orator, and Paolo di Varni dei Rucellai among others. And when he had taken the oath the Pope gave him to his lordship Cervia, that city which he had fortified, and which had once belonged to the dominion of Carlo. I remember as we came back through the streets,

deserted now, the thunder was rolling in the hills towards Vallombrosa, and great drops of rain began to fall as we entered the house of the Medici, and indeed by sunset the city was lost in the rain. Was it thus I found, as in a parable, all his splendour was to end in misery?

The "*Ferma*" which Messer Pier Giovanni and the Cardinal Condulmieri had prepared for Sigismondo, binding him for six months to the Pope's service, took effect, as it proved, on 1st April; from that date Sigismondo was to serve in the pay of the Pope and Church. He was to lead two hundred "*lancia*," consisting in all of six hundred men on horseback, against anyone soever who invaded the Papal states. Now his company, consisting thus of six hundred men with horses, was to be equipped with *la celatta*, the casquet, *il petto*, the breastplate, and *la panciera*, the cuirass, and was to be armed with lance or cross-bow according as each man was the better skilled in one or other. There were to be Pages, also mounted on *ronzini*, our Romagna ponies. So long as Sigismondo was with his company in the lands of his vicariate, or not more than a day's march (twenty miles) distant from them, he was to receive four and a half gold Florins for the maintenance of every *lancia*—that is to say, some nine hundred gold Florins in all every month, besides one hundred gold Florins on his own account; but if he were ordered to go out of his vicariate he was to receive twice as much as the above, and within the lands of the Church dwelling and accommodation for himself and his troops according as it should be possible in any place. All was to be ready within ten days after the first money was paid, and at that time the men and horses were to be passed in review. Moreover, the men were to be enlisted and described by Christian name and surname and place of birth, and the horses to be noted according to their colour and other signs in the usual way.

Thus Sigismondo returned to Rimini a soldier of the Pope, eager enough for service, we may be sure, and anxious to distinguish himself, that that Fame which he had coveted might indeed be his.

Now, the state of affairs at this time in Italy was somewhat as follows:—Francesco Sforza at the Pope's order was besieging Assisi, expecting to take it presently unless new reinforcements reached Fortebraccio, whose troops were not so great in number as before the Patriarch Vitelleschi had taken Monte Fiascone from him. Nevertheless, the Pope thought Fortebraccio might be joined by Francesco, the son of Piccinino, who was to enter Romagna from Bologna as soon as he had received reinforcements from his father, and thence he was to advance by way of the mountains to Borgo S. Sepolcro by leave of the Ordelaffi of Forlì. Therefore Sigismondo was ordered to go with his company to ravage the territory of Forlì, for it was hoped thus, either that the people of Forlì would, from fear, drive out the Ordelaffi and admit Sigismondo, or that at the least the neighbouring mountaineers would be roused to oppose the march of Francesco Piccinino. And Sigismondo with Domenico his brother quickly made ready, and falling on Forlimpopoli, a stronghold on a round hill not far from Forlì, took it from the Ordelaffi; but Francesco Piccinino coming to the aid of that city, Sigismondo began to lay waste the country as he retreated. About that time Francesco Sforza, meeting Fortebraccio in battle, routed his army, and slew him, and for this cause the Duke thought best to come to terms with the Pope, who thus regained the Patrimony of St Peter and the Romagna, peace being signed in Florence on the 10th of August, Sforza holding the Lordship of Ancona.

Nor was this all, for on the 5th of the same month, off Gaeta, the Genoese, at that time under the lordship of the Duke, met and defeated King Alfonso on the seas, Aragon him-

self and his two brothers, with the flower of his barons, being taken prisoners. Now this victory, which astonished all Italy, was soon seen to cut both ways, and one more than the other. For if the Pope were rid of a foe in the fall of Alfonso, that same fall left the Duke master of the Kingdom and, if this were so indeed, master of Italy. The Duke too saw how well Fortune served him, for Alfonso told him that if he were king of Naples it would be to his interest to live on good terms with Milan, who could at any moment open the way for René of Anjou to enter Italy, while again, if René were king, he would certainly try to establish the French in Milan. Therefore the Duke forbade the Genoese to bring home their illustrious captives to Genoa in triumph, and ordered them also to return the ships they had captured ; and Alfonso was brought into Milan, and entertained courteously by the Duke, who later sent him back to Naples, whence he came to Gaeta, which on his liberation had fallen into the hands of some nobles of his party. But the Genoese, enraged at these insults, joined the league of Venice, Florence, and the Pope.

Seeing, then, that Milan was about to make alliance with the King of Aragon, the Pope named René of Anjou, prisoner at that time in Burgundy, as king. And both René and Aragon being beggared, the war went on among their partisans in the Kingdom without either gaining much advantage. Thus was Italy divided against itself.

But for Sigismondo the year ended not without encouragement. For when he had reclaimed from the Count of Urbino the heritage of Rengarda, his father's sister, the first wife of Guidantonio, the Count had for answer assailed Pergola. But in October it was agreed that Domenico should betroth himself to the daughter of Guidantonio, then just five years old, and in the same month Sigismondo was made guardian of Bologna on behalf of the Church.

VII

THAT journey to Florence, so full of a new sort of delight for Sigismondo, was, as I know, never far from his thoughts all through the following winter, when his men being in quarters he was planning how he might make his city not unworthy of his ambition. In those long winter evenings in the Gattolo, ah! how often I have watched his enthusiasm, rejoicing with him too over the splendid things that he would bring to pass. How eagerly he would lean over those great plans for beautiful and impregnable fortresses, or diagrams of the almost marvellous means one might employ for the draining or turning aside of rivers, or certain drawings, mere sketches as I thought them, of great churches, the work of Messer Leon Battista Alberti. Or again on a fine morning he would ride out with me and some few whom he loved, and after a day's hunting perhaps he would speak to me of the way one might tame lions or rule an untamed horse or break in a pack of hounds. And then, an opportunity presenting itself in the early spring, he set out again for Florence really, as I think, for the satisfaction of being in so fine a place, or may be for the sake of consulting Messer Leon Battista Alberti, but ostensibly at any rate for the renewal of the *Ferma*, which had expired at the end of September. This time, however, he went without me, but in goodly company nevertheless, gaining the city at last, as he wrote me, good-humouredly, before sunset, and proceeding at once to the house of the Medici, where he was guest, and indeed some of them rode out to meet him beyond the Porta alla Croce.

He seems to have met all his old friends there in Florence

and to have made new ones ; for the city was in festa for the consecration by the Pope of S. Reparata, which happened on the day of Our Lady, when the Pope, being still in S. Maria Novella, the Florentines, ever glad of an opportunity to show off their wealth and their own greatness, (for indeed, as I know, they are true brethren of Dante Alighieri, who was so scornful,) they built on a scaffolding a platform more than six feet in height and twelve feet wide, covered with every sort of rich stuff, from that church to the Duomo, and by this way came the Pope with his Court and the chief magistrates and other officers appointed to take part in the procession. By that way too went Sigismondo, since the Pope liked to have his Captain near him, much to his own satisfaction, for he delighted in every sort of splendour, and especially in processions, which he would often devise himself for his pleasure and glory, as I have said. And that day indeed he had his fill of honour, for the Pope wishing to please the city which had given him shelter, and thinking that he might not long have the opportunity, knighted on that day the Gonfaloniere of Justice, Giuliano Davanzati, who for this got the government of Pisa, and from among them all the Pope chose out Sigismondo to arm him, and that was thought a great honour. So Sigismondo came home again, and we, who had the news before him, bade him welcome, believing great things for him and Rimini.

Not long after, in April, Pope Eugenius, whose affairs seemed to be improving, left Florence for Bologna, where he came in state with nine Cardinals, yet not wholly, as I know, to the satisfaction of the people, who had no reason to rejoice at the papal rule.

And affairs in Romagna too were by no means settled, nor were the Ordelaffi disposed of by the peace of August 1435, though in that peace the Pope offered them the vicariate of Forlì, leaving Bulls to this effect with Cosimo de' Medici, should they see fit to pay annual tribute to the Holy See. But time

went on, and they paid nothing, concerning themselves only, as might have been expected, in winning back their lordship. Therefore when May came Francesco Sforza was ordered to move from the March of Ancona and to come into the Romagna; and it happened that when, on the 14th, he arrived in Rimini orders reached him of war against the Ordelaffi. You may imagine how glad were Sigismondo and Domenico of this news, for though the winter had been full of work, and Sigismondo at anyrate had lost himself in plans for the future, as always, he loved best that moment when action was necessary. In him, as I have said, there were two men—a man of our time, full of new thoughts, in love with the arts and learning; and another of the age that is past, may be the shade of old Verrucchio, who was never happy unless he were fighting—and in Sigismondo's soul his whole life long these two fought for mastery, and it was never for long that the former might prevail.

Therefore, winter being over and summer to come, news of war in his ears and Sforza at his elbow, he and Domenico set out with the Count, reinforcing his army with their companies against Forlimpopoli and Forlì.

And for certain reasons, which presently became clear enough—for the Pope was already jealous of Sforza's power, and hated him for his lordship of Ancona, which of right belonged to the Holy See—Sforza at anyrate was not anxious, once and for all, to defeat the Ordelaffi, so he encamped a little way off the fortress, and entered into communication with those lords, who, bereft of every assistance, were indeed altogether at his mercy. And the Pope, hearing of it, and not being able to explain how Forlì was not taken, save by the perfidy of Sforza and Sigismondo, sent Baldassare da Offida, Podestà of Bologna, into Romagna, who, coming in haste, took Forlimpopoli. And Sforza for this found himself deprived of the command of the March, while at the same time Sigismondo was ordered to join

Offida, and everywhere there were rumours of peace between the Pope and the Duke of Milan.

Now, when Sigismondo heard that Sforza was in disgrace, knowing that man, and desiring rather to stand well than ill with him, he sent him word that Offida plotted against his life, and presently joined him. At the same time, the fame of the Count being so great—for indeed every man who called himself a soldier loved him—Offida was given up to him by his army. And the Count took him prisoner to his nest of Cotignola, where he was tried, in what fashion I know not, and it matters little, since he was accused of having more than once attempted Sforza's life. Being found guilty he was imprisoned, and not long afterwards put to death. And, as we heard, the Florentines and the Venetians were not displeased at this, for indeed there was none but Sforza who was a match for Piccinino, but the Pope feared more than before that he would never recover the March of Ancona.

At this time, and for long after, these two men stood as the champions of my distracted country. Her champions! who, having wreaked their lust upon her, strove with one another, tearing her in pieces, in which encounter she who suffered was Italy. Great soldiers though they were, and one of them a statesman, it were difficult to find two men more different. For while Sforza was tall, head and shoulders over his men, strong, lean, and tireless, brave as a lion seeking food, full of resource, wary, and inflexible of purpose, and indeed, if once he set his teeth in anything, be it a city or a lordship, he never let it go till it was his, the which happened both with the March of Ancona and the Duchy of Milan, to say nothing of that fair bastard, Madonna Bianca, daughter of the Duke, whom any man but Sforza would have lost twice over; Piccinino was small, and a cripple, easily tired, for riding distressed him, and he

could not walk, a stutterer in speech, without any splendour, yet his men loved and followed him as well as the Sforzeschi followed Sforza. He was daring too, and brave to foolishness, which Sforza never was, nor had he the purpose of the Count. And so, while Sforza from a peasant came to be Duke of Milan, and his sons ruled after him, Piccinino at last ruled nothing but a few feet of earth and the worms, that found him tough enough, be sure, as his enemies had ever done. How strange a contrast they make, these two soldiers, who must often have held the destiny of Italy in their hands, but they knew it not; for in this alone they were alike, that they thought only of themselves and their own glory, and never of Italy.

Now, while things stood thus in Romagna and La Marca, the Genoese expelled the Duke's governor from their city, and, as I have said, joined themselves to the League of Florence, Venice, and the Pope. And the Duke, angered at this, sent Piccinino towards Genoa with all his horse and as much infantry as he could raise, thinking to take that city, but he was not fortunate. Therefore the Duke ordered him to return towards Tuscany, being persuaded to attack Florence by the exiles, the chief of whom was Rinaldo degli Albizzi, who hoped thus to gain that city. On the way towards Pisa Piccinino took Serezana and ravaged the country, and, to annoy the Florentines further, he proceeded to Lucca, giving it out that he was about to go to Naples to aid the King of Aragon. It was at this moment that the Pope drew near to the Duke, and suggested a treaty, but the Duke would consent to nothing unless it gave him Genoa again, while the League had determined that Genoa should remain free, so it became necessary to prosecute the war. The Florentines therefore sent Neri di Gino, their captain, with forces into the country about Pisa, at the same time asking the Pope to send Count Francesco Sforza

to help them, and the Pope consenting, at a great price, the Florentines sent him also against Piccinino; yet they bade him go slowly, for there was still a chance of the treaty which the Pope desired. Nevertheless, winter breaking early, on the 8th February 1437 Sforza fell upon Piccinino at Barga, in the hills near Lucca, and routed him utterly.

In this affair in Tuscany, which led to an attempt by the Florentines to regain Lucca, Sigismondo had no part; for indeed there was enough to do in Rimini, since the Pope, assured now of the perfidy of Sforza, and, as ever, hating him bitterly, seemed to be meditating the suppression of all his vicars in the Romagna, so that not Sforza, nor the Marquis of Ferrara, nor the Malatesti would be spared if opportunity offered. It was chiefly this which determined Sigismondo, after a winter spent in work and thought, in making designs and plans, to pull down the old Gattolo of his family and to build in its place the marvellous and impregnable Rocca which was the wonder of all Italy. It was on the 20th March 1437, not without rejoicings, that the first stone was laid, the whole design and contrivance of the place being due to him, as indeed the inscription bears witness to this day:

Sigismundus Pandulfus Malatesta Pan F. Molem
Hanc, Ariminensium Decus, novam a Fundamentis crexit
construxitque
ac castellum suo nomine Sigismundum appellari
censuit MCCCCXVI

It is true he may have received some hints from Messer Matteo da Pasti when he was at Ferrara early in 1436, or even, as some have thought, from Messer Roberto Valturio of Rimini, the engineer; but, even so, the work was indeed his own, and took him ten years to build, being finished at last in 1446, when Messer Roberto came to us from the Pope's

court, as did Messer Matteo da Pasti, who struck a medal to commemorate the end of these labours; but they came on other business, as I shall record, and were housed in the fortress some have thought they raised: nor do I think any other than Sigismondo could have conceived and built so fierce and strange a place.

For strange, terrible, and altogether wonderful it was, as all who saw it bear witness, and some of them were the best soldiers of Italy. Rising as it did from the very foundations of the Gattolo, it was not far from the Marrechia, and Sigismondo caused a canal to be built, so that the moat, a hundred feet wide, which was to surround the fortress, might always be filled with water; and this moat on the land side was to be guarded by a high wall. The fortress itself was to consist of three courts—one towards the city, one towards the open country, and a third in the midst of these. That towards the city was to be guarded by a wall fifty feet high, and was entered by a great gateway, really a tower, opening on a drawbridge across the moat, and within the ground was high; and that court towards the open country was the same, only within the wall was to be built a narrow platform, high up, from which one might shoot arrows, or use catapults even, or bombs and fire. The third court, La Rocca itself, was within and between these two, flanked on all sides by five towers, and almost divided in twain by the “Maschio,” the great central tower, huge and tremendous, which was the citadel. By I know not how many secret ways one was to be able to escape or to reach every part of the Rocca; and here too were to be hiding-places for food, water, and arms, and there to the right of this tower were to be the apartments of Sigismondo, very simple and yet beautiful too, as he promised himself, but above all in security from the whims of the Pope, as he said, laughing at me, who was ever anxious on his behalf.

From the whims of the Pope! Was it really that he foresaw all the trouble that would come to him from the hatred of the Holy See, or having once deceived it and gone free, did he dream, young as he was, and certainly at this time under the influence of Francesco Sforza, of founding a dominion as old Verrucchio and Carlo too had done, only not with the Pope's leave but at his expense; of recovering all those cities and castles—with others too may be, who knows?—that his family had once ruled as lords? And thinking of this and desiring it, had he determined at least to make sure of Rimini before he placed the rest of his dominions in jeopardy? Certainly he thought the Pope plotted against him and sought to disgrace him, and if this were so he was not the man to lose a kingdom lightly or to suffer the Pope to forget what he owed to the Malatesti. Yet I for one, and indeed I was alone in this, was sorry to see that old Gattolo in ruins, for there passed into nothing the work of Lorenzo Ghiberti—those beautiful frescoes he had painted for Carlo, with other things too not less precious to me at any rate, which, as I think, men will one day come to value for a certain remembrance that clings about them of old and lovely things, a sentiment of the past, which we are so eager to forget in these times of ours, so restless and so anxious, for every splendour, which it seems are about to call those old days barbarous; for in that old castle of the Malatesti was Madonna Francesca's room and Sigismondo's childhood, and at a blow they have been hidden away for ever.

But such thoughts as these troubled not Sigismondo, nor the Marchese Nicolò, who came to Rimini about this time, not less anxious about his lordship. For, seeing what Sigismondo had done, and hearing of his plans, he urged him to fortify Fano also, towards the sea, so that he might, if it were at any time necessary, retire there also, and provide himself with food so long as he wished by means of

the ships of Venice. And Sigismondo, finding his advice good, set about it within the year.

Since he had pulled down the Gattolo he had been living in a house which the family of Roelli had lent him in the Contado di S. Croce, not far from the Piazza del Foro; while Madonna Ginevra, being with child, retired to the convent of La Scolca, where the women of the Malatesti were used to make retreat, and no one looked more anxiously than Sigismondo for the child that was to be born. He was in Rimini but little after all during that year, and when he was there he was full of business, for if the plans for the Rocca filled his leisure, when the Marchese Nicolò was with him he was persuaded to make a treaty with the Malatesti of Pesaro, and though this came to little enough it took up much of his time. Moreover, affairs in Italy, which had seemed to promise peace after the failure of the Florentine adventure towards Lucca, began to frown again and threaten universal war.

Nevertheless, it was at this time, as I think, that he first caught sight of Madonna Isotta, who later ruled his life, holding his soul in her two hands. For, dating from the time of his first coming to that house in the Contrada di S. Croce, a passionate friendship had grown up for him, and had overwhelmed him almost from the first day. Returning one evening later than usual from a day's hunting, he had paused beneath the loggia of a great house not far from his own at the sound of a song, the clear, fresh notes slowly mounting in the melody of some canzone of Petrarch's, falling again in a shower of raindrops it seemed, so limpid, so soft, was that divine voice. He waited there in the twilight till the song was ended, and then went on his way.

Not many days later he found her, a girl somewhat older than himself, and certainly not beautiful, as he told himself, but rather strange, with a certain dignity, a sort of coldness

about her, a real intellectual aloofness, as he found later, very fascinating, and full of surprises. Not beautiful certainly—how often he told himself that!—yet, as it proved, adorned with all beautiful things—that strangely penetrating mind which was so sensitive to every shadow or play of light, that took fire so easily, giving light rather than heat; those hands, that seemed made to hush one to sleep or to lay flowers on the dead, as delicate as that, that trembled when they touched beautiful things, and seemed to give forth life, so that when one was sick or weary, or full of fear or anguish, one had but to feel them to be quite well—and a touch of those finger-tips would suffice. Her hair too, that was the colour of old gold, that seemed to take on the very aspect of the day, and when the sun shone was like a veil behind which someone was smiling. No; she was not beautiful—somehow she seemed to be too strong for that—yet her body was like a flower, that even in its sheath makes one aware of all the beauty and loveliness that will one day burst forth naked in the dew. In spite of herself, or just because of the exquisite vitality that shone in her, one was never able to forget it, even in the most dazzling clothes loaded with jewels and paintings, nor in a simple country dress of green that had lain long in the sun.

Not beautiful, he told me, and all our sculptors and painters have agreed with him, with his first thought of her. Yet soon he spent all his days with her, and found himself talking of the Rocca and his wars, of this plan or of that, holding her gold and crimson work or caring for her musical instruments, so that he won, as I think, from the mere handling of them something of the delicacy and refinement inherent in such things, in all things as I have thought belonging to women; just as he had gathered something of his fierceness, his decision from his swords, that were continually naked in his hands, that

he played with so constantly, the beautiful stealthy daggers of Verrucchio, the lean and shining irons of his father. Gradually under her influence his restlessness, a kind of *ægritudo* or impatience, passed away, as his naïve country roughness had done under the influence of the ways of that great Florentine house, so that he seemed to become assured of himself. It was as though already she had placed her cool hands on his head throbbing with youth, as happened so often later when it ached with remorse and the bitter agony of defeat, soothing him and assuring him of something, I know not what, which is not in the world at all or is there in no satisfying quantity.

Was it love, he asked himself in those days, when the mere delight of her presence, just to sit and talk and talk with her, or if he dared, to be silent, was enough—was it love that possessed him? It was with this question he came to me one evening; how to resolve it? Was it love, since he only wished always to be with her, to hear her voice, and to be silent? Could it be love, since he desired her scarcely at all, was not tortured by that longing to hold her in his arms, to possess her altogether, body devouring body, at least when he was with her, though in her absence sometimes he thought—yes he had enjoyed her in his heart. But all such questions were perforce put aside by affairs in Italy which, threatening so long, had at last burst into war. The trumpets called enticingly down the long valleys; the banners of Sforza were already streaming over the plain; day by day one might hear the men singing on their way to the mountains; far away in the silent summer morning you might catch the flash of a lifted sword or the glint of armour as men hurried northward and west: the day of battle was at cock-crow, and almost before we realised it the message had come, and Sigismondo entered the service of Venice.

VIII

FOR the Duke of Milan was by no means content with the turn affairs had taken after the peace he had made with the Pope; daily he saw the armies of Venice in Brescia and in Bergamo ready for war, and thinking to regain part or all of what he had lost, and seeing the resentment of the Florentines against Venice on account of the affair of Lucca, knowing also the impotence of the Pope, and remembering what Sforza hoped from him, he thought it would not be difficult to induce these powers to abandon the Republic, so that he might deal with her alone; and in order to accomplish his desire he resolved to take Romagna from the Pope, who, as he thought, could not injure him, while the Florentines seeing war so near their territories would prefer to remain quiet. To aid him in his design he ordered Piccinino, who was then in Romagna, to give out that he was enraged at the new friendship between the Duke his master and friend, and Sforza his enemy, and later (still following the Duke's instructions) to deceive the Pope with promises, that, since Sforza had gone over to the Duke, and he, Piccinino, was the only general in Italy who could meet him, he would attack that part of the March held by the Count, so that he would be forced to look to his own interests rather than those of Milan. And the Pope, being deceived, sent him five thousand ducats and many promises. And in this way Piccinino took possession of Ravenna, Bologna, Imola, and Forlì, with many fortresses. Then, turning on the Pope, he laughed at him, saying he who had tried to divide two such friends as the Duke and himself had got what he deserved. Leaving Romagna to his son

Francesco, Piccinino then went with greater part of his force into Lombardy, and began to besiege Brescia. But the Duke excused himself to the Pope, the Florentines, and to Sforza, saying that this piracy was as contrary to his wishes as to theirs, and so they should see when opportunity offered; but they believed him not. Yet Sforza, though the Florentines besought him to march against the Duke, still waited, hoping for the Duke's alliance, and Bianca, his daughter, who had so long been promised to him. And the Duke knowing this, sent him the thirty thousand florins named in the marriage contract. All this time the war proceeded in Lombardy, the Venetians being continually defeated, and Verona as well as Brescia so hard pressed that every day their surrender was expected.

It was at this time then that Sigismondo, not without the Pope's leave, entered the service of Venice. He left Rimini on the 27th of July; and it was Saturday. All the city assembled to see him depart, with a goodly company of horse and foot, to meet one of the greatest generals in Italy.¹ As we heard, he came to the Venetian camp in safety, and finding there other captains, with his own troops and theirs, he met Piccinino on the 20th September at Reggio, on which day, after a long and doubtful encounter, through no fault of his (and indeed he fought so bravely, that if the conduct of a single man might have turned the battle he would have been victorious), the Venetians were defeated, losing all their waggons and *bombarde*. And throughout Italy it was thought a marvellous thing that in the midst of this disaster, the first

¹ Gaspare Broglio, in his unpublished life of Sigismondo, says that he had seen a *Catalogo* of the famous Captains of Italy, in which the first place was given to Carmagnuola, the second to Francesco Sforza, called the son of Fortune, the third to Sigismondo Pandolfo, the fourth to Federigo of Urbino, and the fifth to Nicolò Piccinino. See also Clementini, "Raccolto Istórico della Fondazione di Rimini e dell'origine e vite dei Malatesti," vol. ii. page 473.

honour of the day belonged to Sigismondo, a young man, scarcely twenty years old.

With us in Rimini that year, which had begun so tranquilly, went still more happily to its close; for on the 29th September our Madonna Ginevra gave birth to a son, and on this account Messer Mazzancelli di Terni gave a *festa* in the palace of the Podestà, and throughout the city there were tournaments, triumphs, and bonfires, the people gladly shutting their shops for three days, and dancing in the streets.

Thus winter found us rejoicing, looking for the return of Sigismondo. He came at last in the new year, and for his coming needs must we repeat those tournaments and triumphs which we had enjoyed in September, so that he might see them, and that we might welcome him in the Piazza del Foroy, as his fame deserved. Thither came all the city and many strangers, and among the rest, though certainly no stranger, was Madonna Isotta, with her father, Messer Francesco degli Atti, who, as I heard, had been both proud and uneasy to see his daughter so deep in the favour of his lord. I remember well how I watched her all through the noise and jousting of those knights richly armed and divided in order under six banners; nor in spite of the splendour of the spectacle was I alone in this, for there was something strange in her beauty, something that troubled one; and that day certainly, in her green dress embroidered with gold, many looked her way, though not all kindly or worthily, as I know; but Sigismondo made no sign.

But our festa was to end, as it happened, in a funeral, for on the 17th January news reached us of the death of the Emperor; and Sigismondo, remembering his knighthood and his name too, had a solemn office sung in S. Francesco, with all the trappings of a funeral, and a huge catafalque carried in procession and set in the midst of the church. Then, as

sunshine follows rain, as rain had followed sunshine, on the 2nd February, which is dedicated to the Purification of that Glorious One ever Virgin, Galeotto Roberto, Sigismondo's only son, was christened, with much pomp, in S. Giovanni Battista, and named after il Beato by Fra Bartolomeo da Cesena, general of the Eremitani di Scolca; while I, by the great kindness of Sigismondo and by the good will of Madonna Ginevra, held him at the font—too great an honour for me, old pagan that I am, though indeed there is left for those who may discern it paganism enough in our Catholic religion, as Pico, with that inscrutable smile of his, that sought to reconcile Plato with Moses, hath often shown me. But ah! shall I ever forget that day or my joy when he who, as I often told myself, might one day rule Italy, stirred in my arms, and, opening his eyes, clutched at the sunshine with his little hands as though it were the crown he desired? How softly he lay in my arms, under my thoughts, which on that day at any rate built up for him glory and power that, alas! were never to come to anything.

There were other things too which befell that spring, when all the world seemed made of pale gold and ivory, while here the tender, vivid green of the corn, mixed with poppies, cried out shrill, as the voices of girls interrupted by the laughter of children; and there the sea, blue and joyful in the sun, shouted at heaven like a young man, and the sky, like a budding maiden, seemed shy and yet pleased at his noisiness and very far away. Was there magic in the air, some presence, god or devil I know not, that, returning with spring from a country less harsh, had happened on our shores, and, liking the field and the woods and the little hills far back from the sea, had taken up his abode with us and set us singing? If it were not so, how may I explain the love-songs that filled the city, that at dawn came over the port and the sea from the fishing boats, and at noon rose languidly from

the shadow of a church or the coolness beside a fountain, and at evening filled the woods and gardens with a mysterious sweetness? Who had set all the poets singing her praises, and among them Sigismondo too? For one morning, turning the pages of the old great Petrarch that Carlo Malatesta had won in battle, there fluttered from among the pages a little manuscript in Sigismondo's writing, and amid all the blots, scratches, emendations, and ineffectual beginnings and endings of what was evidently a rough sketch for a sonnet, I found these verses:

AD ISOTTAM¹

O vaga e dolce luce, anima altera !
 Creatura gentile, o viso degno
 O lume chiaro angelico e benigno !
 In cui sola virtù mia mente spera.
 Tu sei de mia salute alta e primera
 Anchora che viver mio fermo sostegno
 Turture pure candida e sincera.
 Dinanzi a te l'erbetta e i fior s'inchina
 Vaghi d'esser premi dal dolce pede
 E commossi del tuo ceruleo manto.
 El sol quando se leva lo matina
 Se vanegloria e poi quando te vede
 Sconfito e smorto se ne va con pianto.

¹ Literally :

O lovely and sweet light, O proud heart !
 Gentle soul, O worthy countenance !
 O light, clear, angelic and benign !
 In whom alone my mind hopes for saving grace !
 Thou art the strong and first anchor
 Of my salvation, as of my life
 Thou art the firm support.
 O pure, fair and true dove !
 Before thee bow the grass and the flowers,
 Glad to be pressed by thy soft foot
 And moved by thy skyey mantle.
 The sun when he rises in the morning is vainglorious,
 Then when he sees thee, defeated and pale, he sinks in tears.

Sometimes in the garden among the roses, whither the wind had carried them perhaps from the loggia whence one might see the sea, sometimes in the red room—that room painted in flame colour that he loved best—among the bowls of rose leaves and the old swords, I came upon others, and hid them away, partly because I found them too naïve and moving, not sufficiently clothed with beauty, so that his longing and desire seemed almost grotesque, and partly from a scruple lest Madonna Ginevra might come upon them, and, as woman will, be sorry therefore. And then, perhaps to show me how vain were all my efforts, in his behalf, at that time as always, one day as I came through the city in the twilight I heard a new song set to one of those strange tunes, half chant, half mere endless melody, that rose and fell with the words, and lent them I know not what passionate life and intensity, something at any rate that I for one never found in the words themselves. In a few days all the city was singing the verses, “Ad Divam Isottam” as they were called, and none who sung them but knew then of Sigismondo’s love for Madonna Isotta degli Atti.

Now, though the poem is well enough, it hath many blemishes, but, remembering things which happened later, before I have done I shall write it out *in extenso*, not so much, as I have said, for its delight, though the verses show a pretty fancy, a honey-sweet tongue, a heart of fire and a young man in love, but because of something that I must tell of later, to which these verses invoking gods and men, heaven and earth, all lovers and the stars, are as it were the key. And though Messer Angelo Poliziano may cry “Pish!” and demonstrate in three languages that Sigismondo was no poet; who hath sung his “Canzonette,” sweet though they be, and especially “La Brunettina mia” and “Che sarà della mia vita,” in the streets of Florence? But Sigismondo filled the mouths of Rimini with his “Senza sperar di Salute

conforto," and "Amor crudele in terra mi dispore," and the like; thus if it come to voting the better poet is like to get the worse of it.

For the song itself, or prayer, or invocation, that all Rimini knew by heart, God knows it sounded strange and eager enough, sung in those old, narrow streets in the nights of spring long and long ago, and yet . . .

It begins, as is right, with the name of Domeniddio.

"Succurime per Dio chio son a mal porto . . ."

And such; falls through the seven heavens to Madonna Isotta

"O Voi che sete d'angelica setta . . ."

the seven planets and the moon, and, passing through the twelve signs of the Zodiac, touches earth, and first the birds the skyest things therein

"O Vaghi Ocelli che andati a volo . . ."

and the spring with its roses, and Isotta the Rose, and Love and King Salomone, and they who taught him his melancholy wisdom. Then follows Prince Jacobbe and Madonna Rachel, King David and his Betzaba, Samson and the Philistine Princess. Mounting again, we have King Priamo and Tisbe, and She who burnt Troy, Madonna Dido and Eneas our Prince, and a garland of gods half mortal: Narcissus, Leander, and what not, Medea, Jason, Theseus the King, and Arianna forlorn, Fedra and Ippolito, and such. Then cometh Tristan, who loved Isotta, *ohimé*, but not ours of Italy; Petrarcha and Madonna Laura, martyrs of Amor; and after them all those who make music with the voice, harps, bells, citers, flutes and trumpets; and all these separately in themselves, together in a motley company, gods and men, mortal and immortal, dead or living, he praises and invokes, that they may aid him with his love Isotta, that Rose born in the spring, so that kind and

generous, she may come to him naked into his arms, and he not die, but live.

So sang Sigismondo, and all Rimini with him; while Madonna Ginevra went silently, even demurely, on her way, and was, so far as we might know, as happy as could be with her little son. And the summer passed away; while Sigismondo, sometimes in Tuscany fighting King Alfonso and Federigo of Urbino, who would have helped the Duke, later in Lombardy warring with Piccinino, returned from time to time to Rimini, which, for the most part, was left in peace while that mad war surged over Italy, throwing down to-day what it set up to-morrow, accomplishing nothing, waged, as I have often thought, neither in the cause of the League nor in that of the Duke, but for the pleasure and glory and gain of Sforza, Piccinino, and Vitelleschi, seeking lordships; while between them, between two of them at any rate, letters passed, as was proved by the Florentines later, who thus brought Vitelleschi to his death in S. Angelo, so that the war after all was but a kind of sport or game, in which those who might gain were these captains, and those who must lose the citizens of this beautiful, unhappy, distracted country.

Often when I have seen Sigismondo ride out at the head of his troops, a beautiful and yet sinister figure, swift as a bird of prey, his lean hawk face, so clear cut, so hard and cruel even; his small blue eyes keen and piercing, half closed as was his manner when in thought; his long hair, between gold and red, falling just over the steel of his cuirass—I have wondered if in his heart he knew the uselessness of the game he was engaged in, the mere stupidity of these quarrels in which he served, wars that to satiate the ambition of a few men were gradually destroying our country, undermining its morality, as one might think, destroying its patriotism, its sense of unity. Was it that his restlessness,

his energy forced him to engage in these adventures; or, thinking to save his dominions, was he anxious to serve the Pope, the Venetians, or indeed any powerful and rich state of whose help he might one day stand in need? He was inscrutable, cunning, and full of eloquence, that served to mask his silent thought. I know not why he fought; yet he was too intelligent and too wise not to know that in his need the first to sacrifice him to their convenience would be those powers whom he served. Did he too think to grasp a lordship, to turn his dominion into a dukedom, to establish his family among the great lords? Ah! I know not. He was ever inscrutable, impulsive, avaricious, and yet generous too. He was learned in every branch of knowledge, and of great judgment, eloquent in the exposition of his thoughts; in war he had a singular genius: I have heard men compare him at once with Cicero and Cæsar. What then but a love of war, of glory, of praise, of danger, of the exercise of his genius, carried him into the quarrels of Milan or Naples? For it was not often he had to defend his dominions, and then it was against Pesaro or Urbino that he fought; but he had done that better, often enough, had he been rather in Rimini than in Lombardy or Tuscany.

However it may be, we in Rimini all through that year heard rumours of the war far and far away; sometimes it was a fleet of Venetian galleys full of soldiers that came into the port; then for a day or two the city would ring with the long-drawn Venetian oaths, and Cristoforo or Giovanni da Tolentino would wait upon Madonna; sometimes Sigismondo himself would return, always silent, always preoccupied, and for a day or two the city would be full of his soldiers and the stories of his cunning, his daring, his useless victories. And always we heard that it was Isotta's colours he wore in the field, even his company bore them above his gonfalon; it was to her he sent his news, with her he spent the few

hours he had in Rimini; her hand he kissed last in farewell. Yet Madonna Ginevra's mouth trembled not, only she was more silent than her wont, and her laughter echoed not in the house in the Contado di S. Croce as it had done in the Gattolo, and methought her eyes were harder, and seemed to be searching something out. Certainly, if she were very sorry, she hid it, as became one of her house; yet it may have been on this account that for the most part she had preferred to remain at Villa di Scolca in retreat with her son, for indeed the summer was fresher there than in Rimini itself.

However this may be, I know not well, for before the summer ended Sigismondo sent me to Ferrara to the Court of the Marchese d'Este, who, as we heard, was, at the earnest persuasion of Venice and the Pope, about to enter the League against Milan. In that fair city among the trees some new sort of delight came to me in the company of many old friends, and some new ones too, for the Greeks were gathered there to meet the Pope. So in the company of Bessarion, who spoke with much melancholy—a new thing for him—of the future, beside the fountains in the gardens or under the cypresses, or wandering in the long corridors of the palace, I began to read Plato again, after many years, and talked of him with the greatest delight with the Marchese, while the Churchmen discussed (with no less delight) the reality of purgatorial fire or the procession of the Holy Ghost. Every day, much to the annoyance of the Marchese, the Greek Emperor hunted in the woods round about—you might hear his horns from daylight to dusk; while the whole city was like a fair, for the Council brought together not only those whose treasure was in heaven, but those also who held our earth not altogether unworthy of praise, so that amid the crowd of soldiers, mountebanks, poets, lutanists, scholars, light women, and

such, the Churchmen were like to be lost; and often enough one mistook a mountebank, with his melancholy, watchful face, for some half-starved hermit, and a gay secretary in Orders for a poet at least, which sometimes he was, or a mountebank, which methinks he might have found it hard to disprove that he might be. Then at last the plague fell upon us, and for this, as I have heard, the Marchese thanked Madonna dei Greci, and sent her a jewel too, for it cleared his city of our Latins, and for the moment broke up the Council. Ah! I little thought, when I saw the Bishops fleeing hither and thither, and laughed to myself therefore, that, almost before they could assemble again in Ferrara, I should myself be in tears hurrying to Rimini. Yet so it was. For a messenger reached me on the 16th November, from Madonna Ginevra, towards evening, bidding me come to her with all speed, for Galeotto Roberto lay sick, and Sigismondo was far away. Before nightfall I had bidden the Marchese farewell, and was on my way. I cannot speak of the agony of that journey in the rain, and the night, the grey dawn, the misery of the day, the incredible slowness of our horses along that winter road, flooded in places, and almost impassable. It was past midnight on the 17th when we came in sight of Villa di Scolca and the house of the Bishop. After a moment, for inspection by the guard, we were admitted, and I, rushing blindly on, came at last to the great room of Madonna, to find her on her knees weeping, the body of her little son in her arms. What could I do but weep too, not for myself, but for her, left so lonely beside that little dead body.

Some days later, Sigismondo returning, we laid Galeotto Roberto to rest in S. Francesco, with ceremonies and many tears.

IX

ALL that winter Sigismondo remained in Rimini, busy for the most part with the Rocca, which was already more than half finished; but Madonna Ginevra stayed at La Scolca, sorrowful for the loss of her son. And at that time the hearts of many were turned towards our Lord Jesus Christ by reason of the Foundation in Rimini of the Confraternity of S. Girolamo,¹ in the church of S. Giovanni Battista, for the Reverend Lord and Father Messer Cristoforo da Vicenza, Bishop of our city, had moved the people much by his preaching, as did also that good man Fra Bartolomeo da Parma, and not the people alone, for many of the nobility spent their days praying at the tomb of il beato Galeotto Roberto, and especially before a crucifix still held precious by the brethren, and a piece of the true Cross, together with a fragment of bone of the eleven thousand virgins, and many other relics; but in all this Sigismondo took no part, for he cared more for war than for preaching, and to chastise his enemies rather than himself. And indeed at this time he was almost a stranger to us, departing on the 7th April with his men towards Pergola, which he took from the Ordelaffi on the 10th, for there had been many revolutions in Romagna and the March while Sforza was in Lombardy. On the 24th of April we heard that he had occupied Rocca Contrada, and on the 25th news came that Sforza was at Terzo in the Riminese encamped and contemplating a siege of Forlim-

¹ See the pamphlet, "Alcune Memorie Storiche della Ven. Confraternita che è in Rimini col titolo di S. Girolamo e della SS. Trinità," compilate e scritte dal confratello Dott. Luigi Tonini Riminese. Rimini, 1842.

popoli. Sigismondo joined him with his new invention, a *Bronzina*, which, as he said, carried an iron ball some five miles, and with the help of this machine Forlimpopoli fell on the 10th of May. Then, as we heard, Sforza with our Lord departed for Lombardy, where they were fighting the greater part of the summer, till we in Rimini, growing uneasy at the encroachments of the Count of Urbino, sent him word, so that he returned, with the consent of Sforza, who was as anxious as Sigismondo that Urbino should gain no foothold in that part. Now, as we thought, we should have been safe enough owing to the new friendship of the Malatesti of Pesaro and the promised marriage of Novello with Violante, daughter of the Count Guidantonio of Urbino; but in truth the Duke of Milan was ever striving to rouse troubles in the States of the Church for the friends of the Pope; and the Lords both of Pesaro and Urbino being enemies of Eugenius they seemed to him convenient to his purpose of dividing a part of the forces of the League. But it happened that of the Lords of Pesaro Carlo, the most enterprising, the most devoted to the Duke, had died in 1438 and, on Pandolfo, the Archbishop, and Galeotto, the coward, he could not depend, therefore he turned to the Count of Urbino, who, he thought, would serve his purpose. Almost before we were aware, Count Guidantonio's constable, Balduccio, had seized, on 24th November as we learned, the castle of Tavolato, though he lost there Coloccio, his best Condottiere, and Paoloccio and Battista di Nolfo, his bravest captains, but, angry at this, he gave the town up to be plundered by his soldiery. This news reaching us in the evening, Sigismondo left us at dawn for his revenge, taking in the course of a few days for that one castle seven others from the Feltreschi—to wit, Castelnuovo, Monfatogono, Tavizano, which he gave his men for plunder, Pietra Maura, Penna Rossa, Rontagnano, and Savignano di Rigo. On the 1st December Sigismondo passed to Castelli

di Monticello with his *bombarde*, thinking to try these weapons on the hide of Urbino; but he was prevented, as it happened, for Astorge Manfredi of Faenza sent troops to the Count's assistance, which Sigismondo either killed or took prisoners, and these he hanged before the gates of the Castle, to the great fear of those who defended it, so that on the 8th December they surrendered the place. On the following day he took three other castles from the Count; but winter setting in in earnest, he returned to Rimini. There no pleasant news awaited him, for he learned that his brother Novello Malatesta, charging recklessly in front of his troops in Lombardy on 14th November, had been taken prisoner. For this cause no long time after he set out for Lombardy.

With us the time passed quietly enough. We heard from Ferrara of the Pope's satisfaction at the reconciliation of the Greeks with the Church, though our joy at this news was speedily cooled when we heard that at Basle the Fathers had elected a new Anti-pope, Amadeo of Savoy. But all this was forgotten when on the 10th February we heard by letter from Sigismondo that Signor Domenico Malatesta Novello was free, that the Marchese of Mantua had exchanged him for his own son, who was in Sforza's hands, and that both himself and Novello had been re-engaged by the League.

For Duke Filippo, seeing that so long as Sforza was in Lombardy his danger daily grew worse, wished Piccinino, as of old, to carry the war into Romagna, and to threaten Tuscany, since he did not doubt that with war at his own doors Count Francesco would be compelled to cross the Po, so that such places as he held belonging to the Venetians would remain to him, and that even a new cause of quarrel might arise between the allied states.

Now all this time Sigismondo, who had returned quickly from Lombardy, had been gathering forces to oppose Picci-

nino should he venture southward, for the intention of the Duke was obvious to all; but on 1st March, early in the morning, Federigo, bastard son of Count Guidantonio of Urbino, fell on our Castello di Rupolo, which he knew to be ill guarded, took it, and gave it up to plunder. Sigismondo hated this man, because he had passed himself off as the legitimate son of our Madonna Rengarda, first wife of Guidantonio. Therefore, though Piccinino was in Romagna towards Meldola, he prepared himself rather to meet Federigo; but before he could march we heard, on the one hand, that Piccinino had taken Todorano and several other forts, and on the other that Montibello had fallen into the hands of Federigo, who had beaten Scianchino, one of our best captains; and later again we heard that the Florentines, wishing to prevent the enemy entering Tuscany, were sending Pier Giovanni Orsini to our assistance. In like manner came Baldovino da Tolentino from the March, sent by Count Francesco; nor were the Venetians without pity on us, for they sent us much money, which they could spare better than men. All this enraged Sigismondo, who thought, and rightly, that Tuscany, for instance, was much better able to defend itself than he was, and that they were sending Orsini in the hope of confining the war to his lordship. Nor was the Duke slow to see that part of his plan had succeeded, in that a quarrel was about to arise between our Lords and the Florentines. Therefore he ordered Piccinino to offer to return all our Castles if we would become neutral in his quarrel; and the Count of Urbino also offered us peace, which Sigismondo agreed to accept, on the 28th March 1440, though before the treaty was signed Balduccio had seized Fossa and sacked it. Peace being then arranged, Sigismondo set out in haste for Fano, whence he had heard rumours of the treachery of the Orsini; but, that being arranged,¹ he

¹ Cf. Clementini, *op. cit.* vol. ii. 318.

went in state to Urbino on 13th April to visit Count Guidantonio, who received him most splendidly.

Now Count Guidantonio was at this time a broken man, for on the 9th October 1438 his wife, the Contessa Caterina, who had led him into the camp of the Pope's enemies, had died, and from that time all his wars were fought by Federigo, later to be so famous. On the death of his wife the Count had made pilgrimage to Loretto; and at the time we came to Urbino, for I went with Sigismondo, he was engaged for the most part in pious works against his death, among them being the building of a Duomo, which he had just begun. He was a Franciscan too, and wore under his dress the scapular of the Third Order. Certainly he received us most splendidly; but his heart was not in our business, and as he cared not to discuss affairs, and Sigismondo was eager to be back in Rimini, for in all these wars the work on the Rocca languished, we were glad to depart after four days.

Certainly Sigismondo was joyful beyond his wont at our return, but not I. In that house in the Via S. Croce Madonna Ginevra, as I knew, waited with sad and tired eyes, flitting to and fro softly, and without any of the lightness that used to distinguish her. What was she awaiting? She had lost her little son, and even as old Count Guidantonio seemed to have buried his heart with the Countess Caterina, so when the light went from Galeotto Roberto's eyes it died too in the heart of Madonna Ginevra. And, moreover, Sigismondo wanted her not. He scarcely spoke with her; only now and then I would find him looking at her as she read her Hours, or walked in the garden, always a little way off; while I spoke with him of the Rocca, or of his inventions, or of Plato, till, waiting for a reply, I found that he was thinking of other things.

Thus the spring passed, till June brought us to Corpus

Christi, and with it a guest, Oddantonio of Urbino, the son of the Count, come to return us our visit. For his coming, to do him honour, many jousts, with a tournament, were arranged, but indeed he found us in a time of Festa.¹ For to give our thanks to God for the peace, and to celebrate that noble feast worthily, a procession had been arranged, with a drama, one of those sacred plays that the people are never tired of, and this being given into my hands, I proposed to myself a fine subject—to wit, the Life of our Lord—and determined it should be given with some magnificence. So I decided to begin with the Annunciation, and to continue even to the Ascension. Then I thought the old gods too might come into the play, if only as devils (according to the popular superstition); for I have heard that when Gabriel dropped out of the heavens at Madonna's feet, softly, like a snowflake, on that winter night, Mercurius followed after him, and listened while he spake, and then fled away to alarm the gods. Therefore Mercurius and the rest were in my pageant; and all this I did, much to the delight of Sigismondo; but Madonna Ginevra was not there.

It was not for long, however, that Sigismondo allowed himself to stay in Rimini, for the peace with Piccinino came to nothing, and, seeing his lordship was like to be in danger, he persuaded Novello, his brother, to join the Duke, while he himself served the League, so that since they cared not more for one than for the other, what one lost the other might gain and repay, and thus Novello and himself lose nothing.

Now on the 17th August Sigismondo went out against Forlimpopoli, but did not press the siege, encamping indeed some two miles away from the city, so that Piccinino and Novello, who was now for the Duke, might easily pass in and out to encourage the besieged to hold the place for

¹ Cf. Clementini, *op. cit.* vol. ii p. 318.

the Ordelaffi. Nevertheless, his presence there with a large number of troops—to wit, some fifteen hundred horse and five hundred foot—so moved the Podestà of Ravenna that the Ducal troops being driven out, they admitted into that city a Venetian garrison; while the Manfredi too were not less easily beaten.

Thus things stood in September, Madonna Ginevra being at that time once more at Villa Scolca. Now it happened that I, being in Fano on Sigismondo's affairs, was returning towards Rimini by night, for it was very hot, not alone, but with a boy for servant, and two guards. And since there was no need for haste, and it was long since I had seen Madonna Ginevra, who kept herself close in retreat at Scolca, I turned that way just before dawn. As we passed over the last hill—for the Villa lies in a pleasant valley among the woods—I was riding a little in front of the guards, and my boy was drowsing in his saddle. Just as the first grey daylight cooled the world, though in the wood it was still very dark and close, I caught the sound of stirring leaves and the quick breathing of a horse. Wondering who in this lonely place could be abroad so early, I drew rein, and followed by the *ronzina*, on which my boy still slept, I left the path a little to the right, where the trees were thicker. I had scarcely got thus out of the way when I saw a man pass on a weary horse, that he urged with much violence up the hill. At first, I confess, I thought it was Sigismondo himself; but on calling his name I got no answer, but a quick stare from a pair of eyes that I think could not have been his, though it was still so dark I could not see clearly, while his face was so wrapped in his cloak that one might see no more than the eyes. Seeing us, he left the way, and soon passed out of sight among the trees. My drowsy guards, coming up a few minutes later, had seen and heard nothing of him. I cannot tell how it was—doubtless the stars, that see all things, were accountable—but I was troubled in my mind, and, hoping for

some news, since it was difficult to see whence the rider came if not from La Scolca, I rode on with more speed, coming to the villa about five o'clock. Rousing the porter, I asked if any had been there with news from Rimini; but he knew nothing, and indeed was but just out of his bed. Madonna, they told me, was sleeping, and never roused before eight. I therefore composed myself with what patience I could—for indeed I was restless, and could not get that figure in the wood out of my head—when, just as they brought me breakfast, I heard a scream, and immediately one of the maids ran into the room, crying out that Madonna was murdered. Waiting to hear no more, I rushed up the great staircase, and, guided by the cries of the maids, I found the room, and Madonna too, stretched out on the bed, as white as marble, dead to all seeming. And indeed it proved so, for all our efforts and tears availed nothing. Then I heard that this maid or that had had dreams, and this other had heard strange cries, and another again had shivered at dawn, and such; but none knew anything or could tell a coherent tale. And all the time I was thinking of that rider in the wood, and later of a tale I had heard in Fano of Sigismondo and a certain lady Donna Vannella di Galeotto degli Toschi, and how she had said many times that some witch had foretold her she should be Lady of Rimini. Yet I know nothing,¹ nor was there any sign of violence about Madonna Ginevra; only the pillow lay on the floor beside the bed, and her head was on the mattress, the which at the time seemed strange to me, but then the night was hot. Then again they told me how she had been ailing for long, but would say nothing; and her confessor, a thin and shifty fellow I liked not, was

¹ "I know nothing"—in this Sanseverino is not alone. Broglio knows nothing, nor does Clementini writing in 1617, nor does Battaglini writing in the eighteenth century. Pius II. charged Sigismondo with this murder; but, as Sanseverino says, he hated him for his treachery to Siena, and his evidence is really worthless, or nearly so.

of opinion—and this he said many times—that she died of a broken heart, having lost her son.

How often in those days I would ask myself the question: If Sigismondo has done this thing, to what end and to what purpose? Nevertheless, Pope Pius has not scrupled to accuse him of this murder; but, as I shall relate, Æneas Sylvius hated him for another reason—being a Sieneſe. The beſt proof that he was innocent of this foul deed is that he gained nothing by it, and uſed it to no purpoſe, and again that Nicolò d’Eſte, an honourable and great lord, remained his friend, which certainly he would not have done had he thought Sigismondo guilty of the murder of his daughter. And thoſe who ſay otherwiſe know not Marcheſe Nicolò.¹

But of the rider in the wood I know nothing; and when, ſpeaking later of this to Sigismondo, I told him of that ſtrange meeting he looked me in the eyes curiouſly, and preſently, “Piſh, my man,” ſays he; “never make journey juſt before dawn in the careleſs end of the night, for the ſtars, as you know, at that hour begin to fail, and who knows what ghosſts may be walking?”

Was he guilty of that murder? I ſhall never know. Alas! I may not ſay he could not do it, for if his will were ſet on it, and his pleaſure or advantage jumped that way, I fear he would not ſhrink from even that. For we Italians are without religion, and corrupt above other people.² We are individually highly developed, and have, (ſince the Church ſets us no good example, and, as I have ſometimes thought, in this perhaps the influence of antiquity is moſt unfavourable), as it were, outgrown the limits of that old morality, ſo that we deſpiſe outward law, and no inward rule has taken its place in our hearts. And again, as I have ſaid, everything in our country is illegitimate, and we think rather of greatneſs

¹ Yet Nicolò d’Eſte died ſo ſoon after.

² Cf. Machiavelli, *Discorsi*, L. i. c. 12 and 55.

and weakness than of right or wrong, are more ready to be evil than to lack force or *virtù*.

Was he guilty of that murder? How that question used to torture me, who loved him and Ginevra too! Did he perhaps excuse himself, if he were guilty, with the remembrance of her softness, her languorous ways, her old delight in his love? Did he imagine her unfaithful because she divorced herself from his bed? But he loved many women, and denied himself nothing. Truly it is a great cruelty that we claim to do whatever we wish and will not suffer women to do the same. If they do aught which does not please us, there we are at once with cords and daggers and poison. Also we cannot forget an injury (and this should assure me of the innocence of Sigismondo, since the Estese remained his friends) I do not say forgive, but forget it as a Northerner would do; we nurse our grief till it burns us up. And if by chance forgiveness, that generosity hidden in the heart, be suddenly awakened, perhaps by the preaching of a Friar, it is murdered at once by our imagination, by the more terrible force of the memory of what has been done, and can never be undone.

Something of all this moved in my heart all through that great ceremony of the funeral at S. Francesco, where Sigismondo walked alone, followed by two bishops and many clergy, with a hundred men, clothed sombrely in brown, carrying torches; while the whole city came after, many in tears, for they had loved her well, her quiet, delicate ways, her shy and yet proud manner.

But all this meant little enough to Sigismondo. War claimed him, and almost before the tears were dry and the lights extinguished he was away to meet Piccinino. Had war become a sort of refuge from the accusations of his heart?

However that may be, some whisper of suspicion as to the ending of that innocent life had reached the people; there were scared faces enough at that Funeral, and some of

us were met with angry looks too after Sigismondo was gone. For a Friar coming from Umbria to preach in the March, lacking matter it may be, seized on this, and seeing our Lord away, did not scruple to prophesy terrible things and judgment on a people whose Lord had killed his wife. And this impression of the guilt of Sigismondo, thus strengthened by the ranting of a Friar, was confirmed at least among the common sort by a storm of rain and wind that fell upon us no long time after.¹

On the 25th of October, after many days of rain, that had flooded the Marecchia, a raging wind sprang up that flung the waves so high on that beach of sand at the river's mouth that the water, not being able to escape, spread over the country joining the Ausa, which seemed towards the east of the city rather like a sea than a river, and at last penetrating into the town, by the Porta di S. Andrea, Rimini seemed like a little Venice surrounded on all sides by water. In this flood all the ships in the port, being laden or loading, were carried from their anchorage, some into the fields against the Convent of S. Domenico, others into the midst of the Borgo S. Giuliano, and many over the roofs of the lower houses into the Piazza di S. Nicolò, where they went aground. And in the storm the custom-house was swept into the sea, and never recovered, many losing their lives, more than six thousand scudi of damage being done. Moreover, the fields were so long under water that many of the vines were destroyed. Nor, you may be sure, were the people slow to believe that this was the judgment promised by Master Friar for the sins of Sigismondo, and this report was carried through Italy, partly by the people and sailors, partly, no doubt, by the preacher himself, (for be sure his prophecies did not often win such swift fulfilment,) got Sigismondo the credit of the murder, then and later. But again I say in my heart I know not whether he were guilty or no.

¹ Clementini, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 324.

X

MANY things, scarcely to be discerned at first, were to result from the death of Madonna Ginevra, among them the dissolution of relationship with the Marchese Nicolò, who in those years of inexperience had been Sigismondo's guide. And then new dreams of peace were afoot, a plan of which the Marchese was the principal advocate, to bring Milan to terms with Sforza, to persuade the Duke to carry out his promise to give Madonna Bianca to him in marriage; and for this purpose the Marchese journeyed first to Venice and then to Mantua, contriving at last that Madonna Bianca should be placed in his Court at Ferrara as a pledge—as really the only means of conciliating the Count—till peace were signed. But then, owing perhaps to Piccinino's return to Milan, really alarmed at last, or to a difference of opinion among the others, for where so many were engaged it was difficult to come to an agreement, the inconstant Duke changed his purpose, and nothing was concluded.

And indeed, very early in the year, before winter was really at an end, the Duke began the war again in Venetian territory; while Count Francesco, exacting, as was his way, an increase of pay from the Venetians, prepared to meet him, enrolling Sigismondo among his captains. Seeing then that all his efforts had come to nothing, Marchese Nicolò led Madonna Bianca back to Milan.

Now at this time, in the month of April, Pandolfo Malatesta of Pesaro, the Archbishop, died, leaving Galeotto, the coward, alone in the government, and this encouraged many to form designs upon his inheritance. And among the rest

Sigismondo, with more right than most, being of the same race, and Lord of Rimini and Fano to boot, cast a longing eye on Pesaro, for while it belonged to another he had ever found it as a thorn in his heart. But Count Guidantonio of Urbino, brother-in-law to Galeotto, seven days after the death of the Archbishop, went to Pesaro with Federigo, his son, to guard it as he said, for he trusted not the stout heart of Galeotto; but indeed, as we thought, these two hundred horse and three hundred foot that he brought with him were for use rather against us than any other adversary, for Sigismondo, as a Captain of the League, would have been justified in attacking the city, under pretext of the known adherence both of Urbino and Pesaro to the Duke of Milan. Nevertheless, war was not yet declared between Sigismondo and Urbino; but hearing that Antonio Ordelaffi was negotiating both with the Florentines and the Milanese as to the surrender of Forlì, on 3rd July he went thither to join Orsini, captain of the Florentines, encamped about the place, taking with him some fifteen hundred horse and five hundred foot. Seeing then the strength of the Florentines, Ordelaffi concluded the agreement two days later, and those strongholds that had fallen into the hands of the Milanese being good, the Gonfalon of Florence flew over the city. In the meantime in Rimini he had given refuge, as in the days of Carlo Malatesta, to Alberigo Brancaleoni, he who hated the Feltreschi as men hate those who have cheated them, and he would say that all the race had souls of cats—awaiting an opportunity to seize, with the help of Sigismondo, already enraged about the affair of Pesaro Castel-Durante and other places of Massa-Trebaria of which, under Pope Martin, the Montefeltri had despoiled him. And though Sigismondo wished him well, he thought the time not yet ripe for war, but Brancaleoni, sick with longing, thought otherwise; therefore at the end of August, seeing the Pope ill-disposed towards Urbino (and

indeed he had good cause), he persuaded Angelo di Pietro di Anghiari, newly related to him by marriage, and his own brother Gregorio, to join him and make war upon the Feltreschi. And Sigismondo helped them secretly, so that they took Montelocco, and many other places that had been ours once, including Tavoletto.

Now Federigo had been, till this news reached him, in the pay of the Duke, fighting under the Lord of Faenza, but on the 17th September he came in haste to his father's assistance with some four hundred horse and two hundred foot. Thus he was stronger than Messer Angelo, with whom he sought a battle; but he would not. Therefore Federigo sacked Castello di S. Croce in Sascorbaro, and encamped before Montelocco, placing his *bombarde* for a siege.

Meantime the war in Lombardy was languishing, for all were tired of fighting and spending immense sums of money to no purpose; for the Duke saw that he could gain nothing against Sforza, and the Venetians had added nothing to their territory while Piccinino was away, and he had now returned; the Florentines, on the other hand, who had suffered least, had bought Borgo S. Sepolcro from the Pope; Nicolò d'Este, with the Pope's leave, had possessed himself of the towns of the Manfredi in the Imolese; and again Venice had gained Ravenna by the good will of the people; Forlì had surrendered to Florence—all had their fill, and the Duke was an old man nearing his end. Perhaps he feared death, and wished to compose himself to meet it in peace; perhaps he perceived at last the cunning of his captains, who were anxious rather to make themselves Lords at his expense than for his glory. From whatever cause the war languished; while Sforza too desired peace, for in the kingdom he had lost almost everything to Aragon, who considered him the ally of King René. If war ceased in Lombardy, so thought Sforza at least, he would have time to recover what he had lost in the Kingdom; for

he alone was never weary of war, since by it he lived. In these circumstances the Duke, seeing that peace rested really with Sforza, since the rest were content, offered him again his daughter Bianca in marriage, together with two cities, Cremona and Pontremoli, as dowry, the which Sforza accepted, being created at the same time Arbiter of Peace.

It was during these negotiations that Sigismondo, foreseeing what would come to pass, threw himself openly on the side of Messer Angelo di Pietro di Anghiari, making him the sharer of his fortunes, promising him shelter for himself and his troops in any part of his territory. Messer Angelo, on his part swearing fealty to our Lord and his descendants, promising to serve no King, Signory, or Commune without Sigismondo's leave.

Then Sigismondo, one night in Rimini, laid bare his plans to me, asking for my advice. And I, when I had heard him out, was silent for a long time, thinking of many things, and especially of Madonna Ginevra. Was it for this she had died so opportunely as it seemed?

For Sigismondo, knowing the genius of Sforza, and seeing easily enough that since he was to marry Madonna Bianca of Milan the Dukedom would one day be his, had determined to form a permanent relationship with him, and to enter into negotiations for his marriage with the Count's bastard daughter Madonna Polissena. Now, as I saw well, this proposal would be welcomed by the Count, for he would think that thus he would be even better able to make war in the Kingdom, since Sigismondo would be in Romagna to watch the March of Ancona for him, which he was continually in fear he would one day be forced to restore to the Pope. And so it happened that when these proposals were made to Sforza he agreed eagerly, promising Sigismondo all his support towards the winning of Pesaro; for I think indeed he knew not Sigismondo as Sigismondo knew him.

All these things being thus decided, Sigismondo ordered some of his squadrons captained by his condottieri to march to the help of Angelo d'Anghiari, while he himself on the 23rd September set out for Fermo for his second marriage.

And presently news reached Rimini that Messer Angelo with our troops was in the neighbourhood of the Castle of Montelocco, which he had taken from the Feltreschi with the secret help of Sigismondo, when Federigo returned from the Duke's service, and laid siege to it in his turn, as I have related. Then in Rimini it was told how that, on 1st October, Messer Angelo had attacked Federigo, and defeated him, scattering his army, so that our troops relieved the place; and in that battle the first honours belonged to Messer Gregorio d'Anghiari and to our Giuliano di Fano. But Federigo was not the man to take a beating lightly; it was not long before we heard from him; for in revenge, entering our states by Verrucchio, he daily gathered troops, sparing, as we heard, no expense to collect an army to do us an injury.

But this game pleased not Sforza, who desired peace in Romagna and the March, as I have said; and at that time too he was about to set out for Lombardy as pacificator of Italy—such is the irony of our gods—and to marry his prize, the daughter of the Duke of Milan. And again, as I have said, he relied on Sigismondo, his son-in-law, to defend the March. Therefore he was determined to do all in his power to make general peace, and in this cause, on 16th October, he came to Rimini, and on the next day went to Urbino, and after a time contrived to arrange terms of peace, returning to us in Rimini on the 23rd. But on that night Matteo Griffoni da S. Arcangelo in Vado, one of Urbino's best lieutenants, surprised the fortress of S. Leo, a place set on a great hill rising like a phallus in the valley, and after many attempts scaled it with his soldiers—a thing incredible

had it been defended, but Sigismondo, confident in its natural defence, had but few guards there. After this loss we heard no more of the peace, for Guidantonio wished to forget it. Not so Sforza, who, enraged, threatened worse things for Urbino if this matter went not as he wished. Thus on the 28th of that month he arranged a truce of eight days, and this was first prolonged for three days more, and then again for twenty days further; while Sforza negotiated, tirelessly seeking peace, nor would he leave the March till it was assured, the lands, castles, fortresses, and so forth being restored on both sides. This being arranged (the treaty was signed later on 23rd November in Rimini), the Count went northward to Cremona, where he married Madonna Bianca, for whom he had fought and plotted, and contrived for many years; and shortly after the good news came of the peace arranged by him between the League and the Duke of Milan, which seemed then to depend upon Sforza's marriage—a strange thing, characteristic of the lawlessness of our age; yet all were content with Sforza's judgment save the Pope, who could not forget the March of Ancona.

Things being thus happily settled Sigismondo left Rimini on the 31st December to congratulate his father-in-law, who reposed himself with Madonna Bianca in Cremona. Moreover, there was much to discuss and arrange, for both Sigismondo and the Count hoped to act together to their common advantage.

Now Sforza was enraged to see that the forces of King René were in so poor a plight; for at that time only Naples itself remained to him, and if that were lost the whole Kingdom would stand in the power of Aragon, and its recovery be for ever impossible. Therefore he determined, as soon as it was spring, to bring Madonna Bianca to the March, and himself to pass with all possible haste into the Kingdom, as King René warmly urged him. This and other

things too (for many rumours were in the air of the discontent of the Pope with the peace; of the fury of Piccinino, who had seen his rival and enemy become the son-in-law of his master) Sforza discussed with Sigismondo in Cremona during the first three months of the new year.

Meantime in Rimini we suffered famine, for owing to the flood of which I have spoken there was neither bread nor wine, so that all went short; and the people, remembering Madonna Ginevra and the words of their Friar, cursed Sigismondo and his house; but this remedied nothing and hurt no one. We, on the other hand, who served Sigismondo received orders to set S. Arcangelo in order—that old fortress not far from Rimini—to receive the troops of the Count passing to the March. They came on 25th February. All day we had heard their trumpets faintly in the wind, and at evening news came, not without excitement, cheering, and laughter too among the captains, that Piccinino was created Captain and Gonfaloniere of the Church. Thus old Eugenius showed his fangs, and bade Sforza look to it. Yet for a whole month he lingered with Sigismondo in Cremona, and it was not till the 10th March that our Lord, accompanied by Alessandro Sforza and all the troops of his company on their way to the March, came to S. Arcangelo. Then Sigismondo, still in the company of the Sforzeschi, went to Fermo to bring home Madonna Polissena. Ah! when I remember his first home-coming with Madonna Ginevra, his eagerness and enthusiasm at that time with that little lady between his hands, I cannot think but with sadness of that gay and splendid festa, in the midst of which another took her place so few months after her death, her unaccountable death. Nor was I alone in my sadness, for Madonna Isotta too absented herself from these festivities, and I think Sigismondo himself was glad when they were over at last. Yet indeed they were splendid enough to

delight any who in this fleeting life sees the true splendour of such things—the laughter dying at nightfall, the colours that flaunt on the fairest, the velvets and silks and such that make so fair a show to-day cast to-morrow on the rag-heap, the candles in the sunlight burning away to nothingness, the flowers so fair at sunrise flagged and faded at noon, the music that even in its most joyful notes bears a sort of sadness into the heart, the passing of the passing day. Why should I think of these things now when they are departed, and I am full of years, and already have a foot in the grave, but that yesterday on the wind that had passed over the fields from Florence just such another music came to me from some spring pageant that Signor Lorenzo is so bountiful in providing for his people, so that all day I caught snatches of joy as it were; and at night the city was illuminated, and then one by one I watched the torches die, and the lights fade away in a sort of neglected silence, when all the shouting and kisses were over and the tired city had gone at last to rest. And at that moment, turning to my most dear Pico della Mirandola, seated beside me, his head resting on his hands, I saw there were tears in his eyes too; yes, even in those eyes which have seen the very truth.

But in those days in Rimini was there anyone sorry but I? May be not, for the pale and winsome face of Madonna Ginevra was hidden in the glory of the pageant, the luxurious beauty of Madonna Polissena. Nor had we in Rimini spared any pains to make that entry a triumph. The road from the Porta Romana was covered with cloth of fine wool and tapestries, while festivities were ordered for two successive days. The first of these took place in the palace¹ with most splendid triumphs, to which all persons worthily dressed were admitted. Then after a joyous banquet Sigismondo

¹ Is this the Palace of the Podestà or the house in Via S. Croce or the Rocca, as yet unfinished?

created Cavaliere his first secretary, and my friend, Messer Pier Giovanni Brugnole, who had conducted the negotiations for this marriage, giving him a beautiful cloak of gold brocade, with a sword and spear.

The second festa was held on the day following, in Piazza del Foro, where there was a fine joust, Messer Giovanni da Riva winning the prize—a piece of blue velvet. On the day following the suite and guard of the bride left for the March.

But we were to have our fill of festivals that year, for in the month of May, on the 23rd, Count Francesco, on his way from Cremona to the March, came to Rimini with Madonna Bianca and the flower of his troops, displaying six standards. The first that of the Pope, the second that of the Church, the third that of the S. Marco, the fourth that of Florence, with two others mysteriously furled, which certainly we took to be his own, but others said they were those of King René. It was a splendid sight to see this great company enter our city, Madonna Bianca a-horseback, with eight damozels all dressed alike in green and mounted on white palfreys. And we went out to meet her at the gate, and led her into the city and to court under a baldacchino of silver brocade, and all the street was covered with white cloths. How can I express the sweetness of the songs or the gaiety of the balls, triumphs, and banquets that followed? Only one song, made by Sigismondo, remains in my memory, and that I set down for his sake, though may be it was not the sweetest. . . .

[Here the MS. is defective.]

XI

SFORZA did well to be anxious. That peace which he had made willingly enough, far from bringing him, as he had hoped, an opportunity to recover those cities lost in the Kingdom, seemed rather to be about to involve him in war for the defence of the March. For while the Duke, fearing to see himself gradually supplanted by his son-in-law, if he should remain near at hand, was eager for him to depart to the Kingdom, Aragon, foreseeing this, had long been treating with the Pope, and now suggested to him that the time had come to recover Ancona. In this cause, as I have said, Piccinino gladly entered the pay of Eugenius, and in the early spring marched against Sforza.

Now Sigismondo knew not what to do, for, on the one hand, he desired the help of Sforza that he might seize Pesaro, and, on the other, he did not wish, for no cause at all, to make an enemy of the Pope or to bring Piccinino into his dominions. Therefore, after much debate, he determined to pursue his old tactics, and to persuade Novello, his brother, to side with Piccinino as before, while he still fought beside Sforza. This being decided, when Piccinino had arrived in Romagna, on 26th May, Novello had honoured him, and had made him welcome; but Sigismondo, when he saw him about to pass through Montefeltro for Perugia, first ordering Sforza's rearguard, just then leaving Rimini, to go towards La Marca, followed on the 28th with sixteen hundred horse and four hundred foot.

Meantime we in Rimini were very anxious, for both Sforza and Sigismondo were outnumbered by the Ecclesias-

tics, and, so far as we could see, might not face them. Nor was our fear abated when we had news that Lonzana was besieged, and that the enemy had much artillery; nevertheless, knowing we could expect no aid from Sigismondo, who was busy in the March, we gathered a tiny force, and sent in haste to try to relieve Lonzana; and that valorous gentleman, Messer Andrea Corso, being Constable there, we had hope of success; and in this we were not disappointed, for he so cheered the inhabitants that they made a sortie, and being helped at the same time by our men, Piccinino's troops were put to flight, and we took many prisoners and nearly all their *bombarde*. But fortune was against us, for before mid July Piccinino had taken Todi and Belfonte from the Count, and Città di Castello from Florence, his old enemy; and Sforza could not meet him, as his inferior force was scattered among his fortresses, so that at last Sernano fell also, and Piccinino went into the wild mountains of Visse. Then Sigismondo, who was lurking in a valley hard by at the foot of those mountains, took courage, and, joined by Pietro Brunoro, and taking with him some three thousand foot and scalers, climbed up over the crags to the attack, and would have utterly defeated Piccinino, but that a woman named Bona, whom Brunoro had with him, sent word of the attack, and by this means he escaped defeat; and indeed the aspect of the affair changed so much for the worse that our men were in great danger, and lost at last as many as the enemy, and among them our valiant Federigo Sassoferrato.


The next news we had in Rimini was that the Pope, blind with rage, and hoping to attain by spiritual means what his arms were unable to accomplish, had declared Sforza a rebel against the Holy See. And in the middle of August we heard that Cardinal Scarampo, he who was formerly Archbishop of Florence, and who had taken Vitelleschi's place when they killed him in S. Angelo, was

marching against the Count. Then Sforza turned to Venice for aid, not hoping for it indeed, but that in case he should need it he might know how he stood. But the Republic was tired of war, and delighted too to see Sforza breathless, and it hoped to keep him so till the Duke came to die. Nor were the Florentines willing to help him, though they won him truces from time to time, but never for long enough to give him much advantage.

Now about this time—that is to say, in the month of August—there befell us in Rimini another of those strange and terrible storms that the people, simple in such affairs of the stars, superterrestrial as they are, always considered as the judgment of God, His displeasure with them, and especially with their Lord. Whether indeed in their innocence and simplicity they may be aware where we are unmoved, I know not, but, considering the outcome of this war and the evils that presently fell upon us, it may be that a right understanding of these signs would have warned us of some peril, so that in time we might have prevented the misfortunes that awaited us. For the sun was darkened and eclipsed, and a rushing mighty wind from the west blew down upon us, with rain, and hailstones as large as small loaves of twenty or thirty ounces, and the fury of the wind and the noise were such that we feared for our city, and some thought indeed that the end of this world was at hand. And this tempest, continuing a whole hour, threw down the greater part of the buildings of our city, with the smaller towers, and the walls guarding it seaward were destroyed as though by Sigismondo's *bombarde*. Among the churches and Holy places which suffered was S. Nicolò, the façade of which was utterly ruined, while the church of the Nuns of the Angioli fell, killing three of them who were praying. Such is the irony of God. All our roads too were destroyed, and the fruit and the crops; and this befell in a time of

scarcity. Then followed a miracle, as the people said, for while Messer Morano degli Strozzi of Florence, seeing the horrid tempest, had taken refuge in the house of Messer Bartolomeo della Brava, with his friend, Messer Rinalduccio di Fulcetti, the sea carried a boat on to the roof of the house, which crashed down, killing Messer Rinalduccio and a woman with her *bimbo*, but Messer Morano escaped. And the people said such it was to be a Florentine. Thus in Rimini we were as unfortunate as in the field, where things were unfavourable to us, and we made no headway; for while, on the one hand, the war brought us no nearer Pesaro, on the other it lost us many Castles, and involved us in a quarrel in which we had no interest. And this disturbed Sigismondo, so that he was angered with Sforza.

About this time it seemed to Aragon, who had possessed himself of Naples, that it might be as well to win Sforza to his side, for his barons gave him no peace in the Kingdom. Therefore he sent an ambassador Messer Inico Ghevara, to Sforza, offering him pardon if he would acknowledge him as King. Now when Sigismondo heard this he was furious, for he thought that if he had nothing but loss from this war, no more should Sforza. Therefore when the Count asked his advice as to the answer to be made to the King, Sigismondo, with much craft, pointed out that a double advantage might be won if news were spread that the King and he were in agreement; for, on the one hand, it would terrify Piccinino and the Pope, and, on the other, it would encourage, in their present disorder, Sforza's faithful followers of the March, many of whom were on the point of deserting him. Sforza thought well of this advice, and, following Sigismondo's suggestion, we had letters forged, in which Aragon requested Sforza's return, and promised to defend, preserve, and increase his dominion, as well as to create him Grand Seneschal. And, with much effrontery, these letters were shown to Ghevara,



who in the meantime was practically a prisoner. Then other letters were forged, in which the above-named agreement was announced as signed, and these letters were published in camp. All this being done, Piccinino was deceived, so that he granted a new truce. But Sforza had not seen how fugitive his advantage would be, for when Inico returned, as he did, with this information Aragon felt insulted, so that not only did he seize everything that was Sforza's in the Kingdom, but he sent word to Piccinino that he intended soon to join him in the field, to inflict vengeance upon Sforza both for the insult offered to himself and for that inflicted upon Piccinino. Now that captain, seeing from these tactics that Sforza was at his last gasp, though the year was far advanced, fell upon Tolentino (where the Count then was), Gualdo, and Assisi, and took them.

On 14th December Sigismondo returned to Rimini, for winter had come. A terrible winter it was too for Sigismondo, who had gained nothing but fear and misery from his connection with Sforza. For days he would walk moodily about the Palace, speaking to none; then sometimes he would rouse himself, and often in the company of Madonna Isotta he would seem quite cheerful for a time. And other loves he had too, more fleeting and less worthy, of whom now and then we heard, as Madonna Vannella of Fano, where he was very busy with fortifications for the spring. Only he was always restless, fearing that his lordship might go the way Sforza's seemed to have gone, while any possibility of gaining Pesaro seemed as far off as ever.

Nevertheless, in the new year we were all more joyful than we had had reason to be for many months. For certain differences which had arisen between Sigismondo and Novello were arranged on the last day of the old year, in accordance with the judgment of the Dottore Giovanni de'



Mazzancolli, our friend—Sigismondo going to Cesena to visit his brother, who had married Madonna Violante of Urbino in the previous June. Novello in his turn came to Rimini on the 4th January, staying for two days on his way to Urbino to claim his wife, and so that affair was settled. Then on 1st February Madonna Polissena gave birth to a son, who on the 17th was baptised Galeotto Novello in memory of il Beato and to mark the new friendship between our lord and his brother, Fra Bartolomeo, that good old man holding him at the font.

But these fortunate things, the delightful joys of family life, are fleeting with Lords and soldiers, and in our case at any rate they proved but a glint of sunshine that ushered in a day of storm and terror that came near to ruin us. For soon we heard that Aragon and the Pope were friends; and knowing that a campaign was inevitable Sigismondo, fearing the worst, yet determined by some means to grasp the best, set out for Fano to put the last touches to that place, that it might be defended against all comers. Ah! how weary those years of war seem now, yet then they possessed a certain excitement and even a joy that my pen certainly is not able to express or to communicate to even the most enthusiastic who shall happen upon this manuscript.

Now while Sigismondo was in Fano, Count Guidantonio of Urbino came to die. Therefore our Lord hurried back to Rimini, for it was well known that Oddantonio, his legitimate son and successor, was ruining himself with women, and Sigismondo thought that in these circumstances he might be able to take Pesaro, that treasure he coveted, from Galeazzo, the coward. Therefore he sent first Andrea da Gradara, who had once been in the service of that Lord, to Pesaro, and after him came troops disguised as merchants, hoping thus to take the city; but they were betrayed (it was Andrea de' Romuli, a Florentine, one of these soldiers, who did this

thing for money), and some of them were hanged. This was the first of our misfortunes.

In May Sigismondo, having put Fano in order, and Rimini too as far as might be, though the Rocca was not yet finished, sent into the March six hundred infantry, and later followed them, joining the Count. Nor was it long before we heard from them, for on 6th June they took S. Natoglia, of the lords of Camerino, from Piccinino; and after the fight, which had been fierce, it was delivered to the soldiery—Constable Pazaglia being cut in pieces for some evil he had spoken of Sigismondo. It was easy to see that our Lord was in earnest. Nor was this all, for a short time after Tolentino fell into their hands, so that the affairs of the Count, and ours with his, seemed to be improving. Nevertheless, all this was outweighed by the agreement in June of Aragon and the Pope, and later by the redemption of the King's promise to Piccinino, for in August he arrived in the March with a great army. In July we had urged the Florentines, and the Venetians too, to send us help, but they delayed; and when Aragon came in August it seemed as though we were already beaten, without a blow, for our troops were too few to oppose so large an army in the open; and then almost before we could arrange anything Sassoferrato, one of our strongholds, capitulated to the pontifical troops.

What to do? Count Francesco thought it best to distribute his troops among his strongholds, and to retire with Sigismondo to Fano, which they might hold against any, till help came from Venice and from Florence. This Sigismondo agreed to do, for he wished to remain in those parts, partly in order to be in his own Lordship, lest anything unforeseen might happen, and partly that he might watch Pesaro, on which his heart was set more than ever, now that misfortune was heavy on him. Nor was he idle, for, thinking to ingratiate himself with Aragon, he asked, and received, a safe

conduct to go to visit him; but, hearing that he was still far away round Rocca Contrada, he failed to appear, or to send any answer to the messenger of Alfonso. It was then for the first time the king understood the cunning and fickleness of Sigismondo, who at the time was in Rimini, where we were busy sending any troops we could, both our own and Sforza's, by sea and land to Fano; but the way by land was now closed to us, Count Dolce dell' Anguillara being turned back at Cattolica with his men.

It was September, and no great misfortune had overtaken us since the fall of Sassoferrato, when, to our great joy, Messer Angelo da Anghiari arrived with some fifteen hundred men from Florence, and though their help was late, for Sforza had already lost all the March save Fermo, Ascoli, and Rocca Contrada, now besieged, they were welcome enough. But Aragon and Piccinino were not long idle, nor for long were they content to waste their time over Rocca Contrada, for already Aragon was needed in the Kingdom, and to finish it was necessary to take Fano. I have heard that they hesitated before doing this, knowing its strength, but then, remembering their forces and our poverty, on 12th September they began the siege, Aragon placing himself with his army at Cerbara on the Metauro. Thither came also Piccinino, with Novello and Federigo of Urbino, eager to win a great reputation, that his way might be clear to succeed his brother, spoiled by women. When all had assembled, so great was their number that they extended all round the confines of Urbino and Pesaro. Still Sigismondo was uncertain what to do. At one time he thought of giving up the Count to Aragon; but that was difficult, for Sforza, pawning all his wife's jewels, and his furniture and precious objects with the Jews, had money enough to pay his men, and had taken care to guard Fano with these; and then, as Sigismondo thought, it might have been unwise also, for the Duke would

not be content to see his son-in-law altogether vanquished. However heartless and brutal that may seem, it was indeed most terrible for Sigismondo to see his dominion overrun, his strong city besieged, for no cause of his own, but for Sforza's sake; while Pesaro still lay there in the sun, the prize of the strongest.

The siege, the story of which I will briefly relate (and those who are anxious for the details must find them in the history of Messer Gaspare Broglio, who was a soldier), was one of the most extraordinary of that age. We in Rimini had the tale piece by piece, and, in spite of our fear, could not but laugh, so cunning were Sigismondo and the Count, so reckless and eager was Piccinino. It seems that day by day Piccinino assaulted and fell back, and assaulted again, without gaining much, or indeed anything, when Messer Antonello dalle Cornie, a valorous gentleman, and friend of Sforza's, going out by night to forage, fell into the hands of Carlo da Montone, and was brought before Piccinino. There, to that Captain's face, he began to glorify the valour of Sforza's troops, as though mocking the Bracchesi, and in this he so provoked Piccinino, who was old, lame, maimed, and scarcely able to walk, that he offered, in a rage, to fight a duel with the Count, or to fight ten against ten, or a hundred against a hundred; but for all this Messer Antonello did not cease to excite him more and more, deriding not only his troops, but Piccinino himself; for he thought it would be no small advantage to the Count if a battle could be arranged on some such terms, and he loved Sforza well enough to risk his head in the attempt. Nor was his judgment at fault, for he brought his head and the challenge out of the encounter safely, since Piccinino, wishing Sforza to know of the affair, set him free, and sent him into Fano.

The Count laughed for long, thinking this an excellent means to keep off the assault against the city. Therefore

he sent a Trumpeter to Piccinino, saying that he had accepted a hundred against a hundred, provided that amongst the hundred was Piccinino himself, for he wished to meet him in person.

That was the first news that reached us in Rimini. Later we heard that the Trumpeter had returned, and had brought away a silver brocade coat and ten ducats, and that with him came a Herald to arrange the time and place of the fight. The Count gave the Herald twenty-five ducats and a coat of gold brocade, saying that as soon as Piccinino had decided about the place he would decide about the time.

Now Piccinino, eager as ever, had told Aragon of all this, who for the love he bore him, but chiefly for fear that he should find himself without a captain in the March, exhorted him at first to abandon such a thought; but seeing he gained nothing by this, (and earnestly begged by Piccinino,) he wrote to the Count that the field could be in any place, either in the Kingdom or in the States of the Church. And at last it was decided, after every sort of delay, that they should fight where they were, between the walls of Fano and the Camp. Then the Count asked for time, since he was besieged, and, this being granted, he chose one hundred men, and sent out of the city for a hundred good coursers, at the same time, or may be somewhat before, sending messengers to the Duke, his father-in-law, telling him of the encounter proposed by Piccinino, and adding that he was sorry for it, as he knew the love the Duke had for that Captain, but his honour forbade him to refuse. He was sorry too, he added, and above all, that he who had just gained the Duke's love should be attacked by Piccinino and by the King of Aragon with so huge a force, for it seemed as though the Duke were rather disposed to support his enemies than his son.

To this, as we heard, the Duke answered (partly moved thereto by Sforza's difficulties, partly by the trouble of

Piccinino) that he would show he thought of him as a son by taking away from him every fear of the King; and he desired that the challenges should not be accepted. Meanwhile he wrote to the King, suggesting that he had done enough for the Ecclesiastics, and begging him to offend the Count no further. To Piccinino he wrote that his safety was so dear to him that he could not allow him to risk the engagement. To this Piccinino and the King replied, begging the Duke to consent; but he stood firm, and would not.

The day being come that had been appointed for the fight, Piccinino sent a Trumpeter before daybreak to warn the Count that he was ready, but the Count answered that he would come when the army of Aragon was twenty-five miles distant; for he knew by then, as was the case, that urgent affairs called Aragon to Naples. Withal at dawn Piccinino led his hundred into the field, and sent two Trumpeters to Fano to tell the Count he awaited him and marvelled at his cowardice; but Sforza sent the same reply. Then, seeing Sforza would not come out, they made ready to depart, blowing furiously on their trumpets at the gates of Fano. And a few days later, the King setting out for the Kingdom, where he was forced to winter, the siege was raised, for in and around Rimini a large force from Florence and from Venice was already collected to help the Count, so that Piccinino, fearing to be taken in the rear, and wishing to prevent Sforza's army joining those, encamped on the Foglia at Monte Levecchie, the boundary of Pesaro Urbino and Rimini.

Then came our turn in Rimini, for before we had had no fear for our city, but now it stood in the very eye of the enemy. Soon we heard that Piccinino, with Federigo and Novello, had taken the castle of Meleto, and sacked it, though Novello saved the women. And on the day after we heard their trumpets on the wind, and saw their fires, for they

ravaged the country as far as Ariccione; and all the time we perforce were idle, for we were not strong enough to meet them.

Then suddenly we had great news—strange news and great news, incredible at first—but easy to understand later when one thought it over. For it was said the Duke had joined the League, and would help Sforza, and through Sforza us also, who had lost so much on his account. Hard to understand, I said hard to believe, yet when considered rightly easy to explain; for Duke Filippo had not the courage to see Sforza undone, and at the same time to watch the friendship of Aragon and the Pope.

Now the Count, wishing to consult with Sigismondo, seeing the road thither held by the troops of Piccinino, went aboard ship with Ciarpellone, one of his best captains, and came by sea to our city, where, after consulting with Sigismondo, they went together, taking troops to Mondaino, whence the army of Piccinino could be seen; for to get provisions, no easy thing, he had gone round Monteluro. Then the Count returned by the same way to Fano, taking with him many soldiers. Piccinino hearing of this, and to draw the Count into a snare, sent Roberto da Montalboddo with about three hundred horse towards Fano, and arrived there he ordered him to make as though to retreat on the road to Saltara, but when about three miles from Fano he was to await the Count, and to fall upon him, Piccinino himself being near to support; and so it happened. And again Sforza was forced to retire into the city in confusion, after losing many men.

Furious at these continual defeats Sforza at last led all his troops towards Rimini, and coming into the city with the Venetian ambassador, after a long consultation he and Sigismondo led the army towards Monteluro. Not long after they were overtaken by the Marchese d'Este with eight hundred horse from the Venetians, when on the 8th November, with

all these troops, they set out to cross the Foglia. But Piccinino, hearing of this, sent Novello and Roberto di Montalboddo to Montelabbate to hold the river.

Now Sigismondo came first leading his men, and when he came to the river-bank and saw not Piccinino's troops only, but the Captain himself, it seemed to him that the presence of that general so close to our armies was not only an insult, but showed contempt even for Sforza and himself. Therefore he resolved, though at great risk, to attack him at once; and, without any hesitation, plunging into the flood he led his men with ferocity, surprising the enemy, who had not expected him to attack them in a position so unfavourable, so that they hesitated to engage him. And Sforza coming up was as surprised and angry as they, for he thought Sigismondo's game foolhardy, and even tried (in vain) to stop the encounter, for Sigismondo, as was his way, kept it going hotly. Then was seen the unconscious wisdom of our Lord, for Piccinino's troops, crying out for mercy, did not wish to fight, but to eat and drink, and though they fought valiantly for many hours they could not stop our men nor Sigismondo, as ever in the van, who with his own hand cut down Giovanni da Caravaggio, one of their captains, and was himself found to be wounded, when, night falling, the battle died away in the valleys. In the darkness Piccinino and Novello stole away towards Fano; but on the morrow Sigismondo took Monteluro, Granatola, Pozzo, and La Tomba; and thinking only of Pesaro now, and reminding the Count of what he owed him, persuaded him to attack that city. At first the Count refused, thinking that the best means to secure it was to dispose of the enemy in the field; but when Sigismondo, in a rage, threatened to leave him, he agreed, if those adherents of Sigismondo within the city would rise at the appointed time.

On 11th November therefore they encamped before the city with some twelve thousand soldiers; but delay was fatal

to their hopes, for the Count of Urbino heard of their design, and Federigo had entered the city with his troops on the day before. Seeing this, and being anxious not to lose the fruit of their victory over Piccinino, after taking the castles of Candelara, Montelabbate, and Novilara, with Montalboddo, both the Count and Sigismondo laid siege to S. Piero dell' Aglio, but in spite of every effort and device with *bombarde* and engines contrived by Sigismondo, who continued the siege throughout December, they were compelled by winter to abandon it. Sigismondo, however, remained in La Marca with his father-in-law the greater part of January, only returning to Rimini on the 23rd of that month.

More furious and enraged than before at the uselessness of the campaign, in which for Sforza's sake he had not only risked the loss of Pesaro, which might have been his, but had placed his own dominions in jeopardy, notwithstanding the severity of the season—for indeed the snow lay deep in the valleys, and from day to day more snow fell, so that the roads were almost impassable,—on 8th February he set out, as it happened, in a snowstorm, in which it was impossible to see a man standing ten feet distant, for Monte Gaudio, in the territory of Pesaro, hoping even yet to win something for himself. On that day too, almost overcome by cold and fatigue, Bartolomeo Colleoni arrived in our dominion with one thousand horse and four hundred foot from the Venetians, and this, as we learned, alarmed the Ecclesiastics more than anything that had happened, for they knew the fame of that commander, and knew too for what purpose he had come hither. Later, news came breathless that Sigismondo had compelled Monte Gaudio to surrender, and was about to make a raid into the territory of Urbino. On 17th March he won a victory at Cagli, and, turning aside, marched on Sinigaglia, when Galeazzo, the coward, already a captive in his heart, made a truce with him, to which Sigis-

mondo consented not unwillingly, for we had sent him word of the approach of Francesco Piccinino to his father's assistance with six hundred horse and three hundred foot. The truce was published in Rimini on 2nd April, and was to last for fifteen days; but later, Sigismondo seeing no help for it, consented to prolong it till June, and at the Count's request set out for Venice, to hasten, if it were possible, the payment of the money due from that Republic to Sforza. Just here we come upon one of the fatal mistakes (for I see no reason to use a harsher term) of Sigismondo's life. For returning with the money, unhappy, and full of rage at his misfortunes, that were the work of the Count, angry with him too, and calculating what he owed to him—more than one winter's quarters in Fano, for instance, as well as food and provender for a good part of his troops—remembering also that he himself needed a large sum immediately if he were to continue the campaign, Sigismondo sent not one *soldo* of what he had received from Venice to the Count, but he kept it all. How fatal this action proved to all his hopes soon began to appear, for the Count, who had already entrusted what had been paid to him by Florence to Ciarpellone and other Captains, was reduced almost to beggary. Yet, as it proved, it was not convenient for him at that moment to come to an open rupture with Sigismondo, for Piccinino, well furnished with money both by Aragon and the Pope, was on the point of continuing the campaign. But on account of Sigismondo's action he was compelled for a time to remain in Fermo between the army of the king newly come into the field and that of the Pope commanded by Piccinino. And indeed no way was open to him, save the sea, by which to receive either food or ammunition. At last Ciarpellone came to his rescue with much astuteness, for he led what troops he had up and down the March, attacking first one place and then another, now here now there, con-

fusing the enemy, who were compelled to remove from Fermo to defend the places that seemed in danger from him. At length the Count, able now to leave the city, ordered Sigismondo with all his troops, even those in Fano, to take up a position between Osimo and Recanati, and at the same time he sent Ciarpellone with his companies thither also, and promised to join them there himself. But just at this time—to wit, 9th June—the truce between Sigismondo and Pesaro and Urbino expired; and Matteo Griffone, a captain of Urbino, fell upon Montelabbate and La Tomba, and took them. Therefore Sigismondo, forgetting the Count, took all his troops, both horse and foot, with many *Briccole*, *Bombarde*, and *Mantelette*—and many of these were of his own invention—and fell upon La Tomba, which had surrendered almost without fighting to Griffone, who soon yielded the place on receiving a promise of his own life and those of his men. This done with, Sigismondo thought he could safely turn to help the Count, and the more so for that Leonello of Ferrara, who had lately married the daughter of Aragon, and was Sigismondo's friend, had arranged already a truce of six months between us and Urbino, for it seemed to him that Galeazzo of Pesaro was helpless without Federigo's help. Therefore, without delay, on 20th June he marched towards Sinigaglia to the Count's assistance, to whom he sent saying that he would come as far as he could, but that Piccinino stood between them with his army. Ciarpellone, being informed of this message, sent to Sigismondo, and bade him wait till he arrived, so that they might march together; but while he waited the troops of Pesaro began to harry our villages near to Rimini, and some of their galleys preyed on our merchandise before the port, but these we soon captured with the Count's assistance. Nevertheless, hostilities were renewed with Pesaro; and Ciarpellone still delaying, and Sigismondo himself being ill, he returned to Rimini in July,

having, as he thought and declared, wasted a month again for Sforza's sake.

Truly these two men could not be friends; for while Sforza was patient and cautious, Sigismondo was impetuous, brave even to foolishness, and so restless that a day of idleness was unbearable to him. Thus it is not surprising, even though there had been no other cause, and that there was, that Sigismondo was angered with Sforza, and Sforza was furious with Sigismondo. For, seeing what he had done, how that not once, nor twice, he had left him to fight his own battles, and at last had retired to Rimini, and moreover, thinking that the interposition of Leonello d'Este on his behalf and their friendship (since Leonello was the son-in-law of Aragon) pointed to some agreement between Sigismondo and the Pope and Aragon, Sforza, as is said, went so far as to accuse our Lord of deserting him; but this came not to Sigismondo's ears. Now whether he who had wasted more than two years in Sforza's quarrel, had put in danger his whole dominion, and had quarrelled with the Pope and Aragon, and suffered excommunication for his sake, could rightly be accused of lack of devotion in a cause that after all was not his own, I leave to the judgment of posterity. The truth is that Sigismondo in fighting Sforza's battle had neglected his own, and at this time certainly his own dominions imperiously demanded his attention; for Oddantonio being at last killed by his subjects, Federigo, that boaster, our great enemy, who has ever continued to make men take him at his own value, was proclaimed Duke, their county having become a Dukedom by the Pope's leave during Oddantonio's lifetime, as a reward for their labours against Sforza and ourselves.

I know not well how to speak of Federigo, who in everything was Sigismondo's rival, and in that I find his only claim to be of the blood of the Malatesti. He boasted he had


never lost a battle ; yet that was later, when good fortune had led him to forget the stripes of Sigismondo. Yet, with all his ugliness and high words, he was a great man too, for he loved learning and fathered it, nor do I think any lord in Italy, save Lorenzo de' Medici, had so fine a Library or a court so little barbarous. Indeed, the thing that I have understood least of all those I have encountered in my life is that three such men as Sigismondo, Sforza, and Federigo of Urbino, were not able to sink their paltry differences and to weld Italy into one nation ; nor can I explain how it is that this idea, which seems to me the worthiest of all, should never have occurred to them.

Now the Pesarese were restless, for Galeazzo, the coward, as I have often known to be the case with such, driven into a corner, and unable to escape, was become almost a brave man, or at least a desperate one. He therefore began to attack our castles, and even to take one or two ; and this I think he was bold to do, supported in his heart by the excommunication of Sigismondo ; for such men are ever superstitious, and depend more on a priest's word than on the reasons of a philosopher or the art of a general. And at last, venturing into the territory of Fano, he thought to attack that city, when Odoardo de' Michelotti, one of Sforza's Captains, came to our aid ; but Sigismondo trusted him not, being aware of the anger of the Count against him, therefore he sent forth an embassy begging Michelotti to come no farther ; but he encamped on our side Metauro, so that it was thought best to show our trust in him.

It was just at this time that the Duke of Milan, perhaps wishing to show his friendship for his son-in-law, sent for Piccinino to come to Milan, who, not to be unfaithful to Aragon and the Pope, left Francesco, his son, to command in the March. Sforza, hearing of this, immediately prepared to take advantage of it. Quitting Fermo with all his starving


troops, telling them that now was their last chance of wealth and victory, he went to Monte dell' Olmo, where he found Francesco Piccinino, and fell upon him with so much fury and force that he drove him across the plains with a loss of some three thousand horse, and pursuing, took him prisoner—Cardinal Domenico Capranica, the Pope's legate, and Novello Malatesta escaping by the skin of their teeth. This great victory did in one day what more than two years' fighting had not been able to accomplish, for almost the whole March returned into the possession of Sforza, and the Pope was easily persuaded to listen to proposals for peace. Nor was this all; for Piccinino, who had only gone to Milan reluctantly, and after much persuasion, being an old man, and unable to bear this disgrace and misfortune, died heart-broken on hearing the news on 25th October. And with his death there seemed to be left in Italy no captain who had the experience and genius necessary to meet Francesco Sforza.

Ah! but not so happily did the year end for Sigismondo. Going to congratulate his father-in-law in Fermo, and to explain too the disloyalty with which, now that Sforza was victorious, many did not hesitate to charge our Lord—not only was his explanation refused, but when he offered his services he saw preferred before him Federigo of Urbino, who was anxious to take service with the Count. With what bitterness he returned to Rimini, with what anger and fury I will not describe; but the heaviest blow was still to come: for when Galeazzo of Pesaro saw that the Count and the Duke were furious, fearing that either Urbino with Sforza's help and encouragement, or Sigismondo without it, would seize Pesaro by force, he sold that city and Fossombrone to Sforza, who gave Pesaro to Alessandro, his brother, and again sold Fossombrone for thirteen thousand florins to Federigo, our enemy. Thus Sigismondo lost Pesaro, that city on which his heart was set.



.
... You conceive the character and spirit of Sigismondo altogether amiss if you should think that even in the midst of the misfortunes that had fallen upon his whole dominion he was the man to remain quiet under these insults, or to suffer the disloyalty and contempt of Sforza and Federigo without a blow for his own honour.

It was the middle of February when we heard in Rimini that Sforza had sold Fossombrone to Federigo, and with that news in his heart Sigismondo determined on some revenge; for he looked on Federigo as the cause and source of his undoing, and as he had ever hated that interloper, so now he thought to rid himself once for all of a proclaimed enemy. For dangerously, illogically too as I cannot but think, he dreamed that his brother Novello, having married Violante, the legitimate daughter of Guidantonio, had a better right than Federigo, the bastard son of the Count, to the lordship of Urbino, forgetting that he too was illegitimate, and had indeed no better right to Rimini than Federigo to Urbino. And it may be too that it was a knowledge of this claim of the Malatesti to Urbino that had raised up Federigo as their implacable foe. But then, as Sigismondo reminded himself, this bastard claimed wrongly and impudently to be of the blood of the Malatesti, and had at last possessed himself of Fossombrone, a city not long since in their dominion, buying it with money from Sforza the Fox; and by his intervention also Pesaro was lost for ever. All this and more being in his heart, on 21st February he sent Giovanni da Sassoferrato, at that time his chancellor, to Federigo of Urbino with the following challenge, hoping thus, as I have said, to rid himself for ever of one he hated with all his heart:—



To the Lord Federigo of Montefeltro, Captain-General of the illustrious Count Francesco Sforza

MIGHTY LORD,—Your Lordship is not ignorant of the differences which have long existed between us, and if you judge rightly, you will perceive that the right is on my side. Patience is no virtue of mine, and it seems also that you are not disposed to amend your ways: on the contrary every day you multiply your injuries. Lately you have written against me to the Court of Rome, defaming and calumniating me. I am determined to support this no longer but to show you that I am a better man than yourself, for indeed you are a traitor and have done wrong to outrage me thus. I therefore send to you Giovanni da Sassoferrato, my chancellor, with full authority to challenge you to a duel. By your former letter you have already declared yourself as willing to accept: and although Giovanni holds my public challenge I wished to write this private letter as more sure, praying you not to change. If you are the brave man you claim to be, I require you to send me one of your familiars who may be informed of your intentions, of the time, of the manner, of the place, where we shall meet and under what conditions. I ask also that we may agree as to the place to be chosen. He whom you send should come with four horses, his life shall be secured and my letter will serve him as safe conduct for his advent and return. In case you should not accept my challenge which I do not believe, I warn you that I shall proceed against you in any way that seems good to me.

SIGISMUNDUS PANDULPHUS DE MALATESTIS.

Rimini, XXI *February* 1445.

But all this came to nothing, partly because a place of meeting could not be agreed upon (though Federigo boasted that he went to Pesaro, and awaited Sigismondo under the walls of that city, but he came not—yet even Federigo can



Book cover of "The Book of the Dead"
from the collection of the British Museum




*Federigo of Urbino.
after a bas relief of XV century in the Bargello, Florence.*

1700



hardly have thought our Lord so great a fool as to meet him there), partly because Sforza, coming to hear of the affair, forced them to be friends, confirming Sigismondo in the possession of the Castle of Gradara, and of Monteluro, Granarolo and Pozzo in the Pesarese; and a treaty to this effect was signed on 14th March.

Now our Lord was not alone in his rage at the perfidy of Sforza; for, on the one hand, the Pope was angered at the disposal of Pesaro and Fossombrone without his leave, and, on the other, the Duke of Milan began to fear that, Piccinino being dead, his son-in-law would dominate the Dukedom. On this account then before long a new league was formed between the Pope and the Duke to curb the Count's ambition and, if it were found possible, to spoil him of those cities which he had acquired in the States of the Church. Nor was Sigismondo slow to forward this agreement, nor to accept the Captain-Generalship of the forces of the Church when no long time after it was offered to him. Yet he was not content, for while himself in the Rocca of Gradara, on the day after Alessandro Sforza had taken possession of Pesaro—which was bitter gall to him—he sent to Antonio Albertone, bidding him to go to Alfonso of Aragon to ask for his support, and at the same time he sent Benvenuto de Forte to the Duke, and four days later Giovanni da Sassoferrato to the Pope. Thus Sigismondo raised up foes against Sforza and Federigo. At first fortune was still against him; for Sforza, urged thereto by Urbino, drove the Malatesti out of the March, wisely clearing his way of retreat, in case in the war Sigismondo was about to force on him he were not successful. Having accomplished his purpose he encamped on the Foglia, near Montelabatte, with some four thousand men, and, having given over this army to Federigo, set out himself for Florence, to get money from that Commune or from his



friend, Cosimo de' Medici. And when he returned he began to raid the country about Rimini and about Fano, which was for the most part at his mercy, since Sigismondo was almost without forces, for the Pope's troops were not yet arrived, nor the Duke's neither. At length a few companies came to Rimini, sent by Alfonso, and with these Novello went out against Sforza; but the Count still had the advantage, so that we found it necessary to abandon our castles in the Pesarese in order to regain our own around Rimini. And all this time, for already the season was well advanced, Sigismondo continued to urge the Pope to send his troops, lest the enemy should strengthen himself in those places he had taken; but the Pope was slow to do that, for he was not long returned to Rome after nine years and more of exile.

In those days we rejoiced in Rimini in spite of our misfortunes, for Bartolomeo de' Malatesti entered the city as Bishop on 18th August; and then, a few days later, some troops arrived from the Pope, and Sigismondo led them to Fano; but still we were too weak to face Sforza.

Then Sigismondo determined to go to the Abruzzi to see the King, and himself to urge the necessity of sending us troops. He set out on 5th September in a light galley, escorted by a galley of war, commanded by Bernardo Villamarino, and, as we heard, arrived safely, and was much honoured by the King, who thought so well of him that he gave him the pick of his army, and sent him back with many squadrons. Without losing a day Sigismondo gathered all his troops (there went with him every man he had), and encamped at Osimo, whence the Count had his provender; and at the same time the galleys of Aragon cut off his provisions by sea, so that he could receive nothing save by way of Tuscany—the great, and, as it was thought, impregnable fortress of Rocca Contrada protecting him on that side.

Our time had come at last, for there befell this marvellous thing: with a daring only equalled by his genius, Sigismondo, in what wonderful way I know not (though often I have had the tale from Gaspare Broglio, who was there), took Rocca Contrada by assault on the 15th October; and by this victory, which filled Italy with astonishment, he rendered the March no longer secure for Sforza. Then on the 17th Sigismondo seized Cassero also, so that the Count, finding himself beaten at last, realising his danger, retreated in haste towards Urbino, encamping some three miles from that city, at Fermignano; but before he could move Sassoferrato had fallen, and by the end of November all the March was in our power; and in Fermo itself we hunted Alessandro like a hare round and round the city.

Then, the season being wintry, the armies went into quarters—Sforza, with Madonna Bianca, his wife, going to Pesaro, while Sigismondo, master of La Marca, returned to Rimini on 29th of November.

XII

THAT winter in Rimini was indeed one long festival, for our Lord had delivered us out of the hands of the enemy, from the jaws of the wolf, from the cunning of the fox. He came home in triumph—the whole city going out to meet him, singing his songs—for he rode into Rimini with Madonna Isotta beside him, his standards unfurled, on which was emblazoned her name with his. And indeed she was the prize of his victory, for till then he had loved her in vain.

How may I hope to describe this lady, whom he loved above every other woman, "*Sopra ogni altra da lui amata*" as they sang, and whom I too have loved, not for his sake alone? She was not beautiful as the men of our time count beauty: her face was rather harmonious than lovely, her aspect thoughtful, and even a little pensive, yet full of a sort of energy. But her body, like a jewel hid in a pierced casket, subtly expressed in the dress of that time, was of a singular beauty, that, as I think, none looking upon her might ever forget, that even an old scholar like myself, with after all but little aptitude for love, can only remember with uneasiness and delight. Such, I have sometimes thought, must have been the strange beauty of Helen, that burnt Troy; such the singular loveliness of Persephone, that drove Hades to that rape among the flowers; such too perhaps the mysterious maddening delight of her from whom our Isotta had her name—I mean that lady through whom Tristram came by his death. And just there lies another thought: for there is something fatal in those who possess this excellent beauty, and, as it seems, something unfortunate in store for those

who are entangled by it. Certainly there was poison in the honey of Helen's mouth, and the cold, sweet lips of Persephone have sucked the dear life from all men born; the arms of Queen Cleopatra hanged Prince Antony, and Tristram died of the kisses of Iseult. Ah! was there too in the sweet, lithe body of Madonna Isotta something of that old poison that our Mother Eve ate with the serpent's apple? . . . However that may be, certainly Isotta had been hard to win; it was not easily that she became his *Dama*. For she was of a noble family, and that forbade her; she was prudent, wise, stable, and of an honest soul, and that forbade her too; but she loved Sigismondo, and she too was a poet.¹ Are these excuses that I am forcing myself to make for one in whom I can discern no wrong, whom I have ever honoured and been glad to serve? Ah! no, not excuses, but perhaps a word in explanation of this which befell; for Francesco degli Atti, her father, who blamed her much for this unlawful love, and would not forgive her, and treated her harshly; and it may be a little for Madonna Polissena, who was sorry therefore, and never understood, as we have been assured, that true love between those who have been married together is impossible; for whereas lovers grant to each other favours freely, and not of necessity, married people are bound to obey each other's wishes, and can refuse nothing the one to the other.

There were other things too, besides Sigismondo's delight in possessing Isotta at last, that made that winter joyful and brilliant in Rimini; for in the autumn, Messer Vittore Pisano, the painter and medallist, at that time in the service of the Marchese Leonello d'Este, for whom he made some surprising things, hearing of the Rocca which Sigismondo was building in Rimini, and being curious of all curious things,

¹ Cf. two curious poems by Porcellio Napoletano, in which Isotta excuses herself to her father, and is rebuked by him.

came to us from Ferrara, and almost at the same time, by chance, Sigismondo came also to Rimini for a few days. He took much pleasure in the beautiful things Messer Vittore brought with him; but at the time, being busy with the war, yet wishing to possess something from the hand of that most famous man, he begged him to make a medal, the which he might give to Madonna Isotta, and that she might see in whose cause he was fighting, and for what prize, he bade Messer Vittore carve a rose there, for, as he said, she was the Rose of roses. Messer Vittore set to work, and before long had made, as I have thought, his masterpiece; and indeed he did his best, and took infinite trouble, as I can testify, for he loved Sigismondo well. The medal he made at that time is the one in which there is a bust of Sigismondo in chain armour, on his breast lies the Rose, and the legend round this side of the medal runs, SIGISMUNDUS PANDULPHUS DE MALATESTIS ARIMINI FANI D, and on either side of the D, which stands for DOMINUS, is a rose. On the other side you may see our Lord in full plate armour over mail; he stands just about to draw his sword (as he was) between two rose-trees, on one of which hangs a shield surmounted by a rose, on which the S of Sigismondo enfolds the I of Isotta; on the other stands his elephant's head, most beautifully carved; while at the base of the medal you read, OPUS PISANI PICTORIS.

When Messer Vittore had finished his work and cast it, by Sigismondo's order, I took it to Madonna Isotta, who found it beautiful.

Now when Sigismondo returned again to Rimini in November, after the victory of Rocca Contrada, being glad at the beauty of Messer Vittore's work, he bade him cast another medal to immortalise that victory, the which he did. On one side, as before, he made the likeness of Sigismondo, and around is set this legend, SIGISMUNDUS DE MALATESTIS





*Sigismondo Malatesta.
from a medal by Pisanello in the British Museum.*

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ARIMINI ET ROMANE ECCLESIE CAPITANEUS GENERALIS, and on the other our Lord on horseback (his harness bearing the rose, for the Rose was the prize of the victory) making the signal for the fight to cease, for the Rocca, which is in the background, already bears his shield (as in the former medal); while over the gate of the castle is set the date MCCCCXLV, and around the base of the medal you read, OPUS PISANI PICTORIS.

Now, in spite of his victories, our Lord was not content, nor altogether secure, as he thought, for he feared lest the allies should be as slow to enter on the campaign in the coming spring as they had been in the past. Therefore on the 12th December he set out for Rome to explain to Eugenius what he had in view. He was very honourably received by the Pope and the College of Cardinals; while with his own hand Eugenius presented him, as the successful defender of the Church, with a sword and a helmet blessed by His Holiness; and, as we heard, no Prince for a long time had been so honourably received in Rome.

On our Lord's return he brought with him Messer Roberto Valturio, the engineer, whose family had for generations served the Lords of Rimini, in whose city Messer Roberto also had been born, but having a relation in the Pope's service he had early left Rimini for Rome, and had remained away from his native city till Sigismondo, finding him in the Court of the Pope, and hearing he was willing to enter his service, had begged him of the Pope, and brought him along with him; for the wonder of the Rocca had gone through Italy, and such a man as Messer Roberto was as curious to see it as any.

However, at this time Sigismondo was but little in Rimini, for no sooner was he returned from Rome than he set out for Milan on 2nd February, for the Duke earnestly desired to talk with him; and he remained in that city for some weeks, only returning to Rimini on 19th March. In the meantime we in Rimini had heard rumours of Federigo's doings—to wit, how that he plotted to get possession of Fano, and, word of this coming also to Alfonso, he sent men thither to encourage the citizens in their loyalty to us, declaring Sigismondo under his protection. And Sigismondo hearing of it sent Bartolomeo dei Malatesti, Bishop of Rimini, to Rome as his ambassador, at the same time himself quitting Rimini to join Cardinal Scarampo in La Marca. And as a result of Bartolomeo's mission, on Holy Thursday, 14th April, the Pope excommunicated the Sforzas, Federigo of Urbino, and Galeazzo Malatesta of Pesaro for disposing of that city and of Fossombrone without leave of the Holy See.

Now all Sforza's strength lay in the money the Florentines lent him, for without it he would not have been able to continue the war; and the Pope knowing this, when we urged him to send us men and money, in his turn urged Alfonso to carry the war into Tuscany. Sforza when he heard of it promised to pass into the Dukedom of Spoleto, and even to Rome itself; for he had friends even in the Cardinal's College, so that the Pope was compelled to go carefully. We too were anxious, for if the Pope came to some discreet agreement with Sforza we found we should be compelled to meet him single-handed, for Aragon would do nothing to help us, as we heard, since the Pope had refused him leave to tax the clergy to get money for the war. For these and certain other reasons Sigismondo thought he ought to suspect the Pope, and therefore he determined to send Messer Gaspare Broglio to Rome to discover, if it were possible, the real disposition of His Holiness towards us. Broglio learnt from

them that at all costs the Pope was determined to maintain his state. Yet Sigismondo was not easy in his mind, for he wondered where he should find men and money, seeing that none came from the Church and Alfonso's army was already half starving and disposed to treat with Sforza. And for this cause he often contemplated an acceptance of the truce Sforza had asked him for so often. Broglio, however, was opposed to this, for, as he said, if it suited him the Count would not observe the agreement, and he would certainly use it to set the Pope against Sigismondo. He therefore urged our Lord to make a truce, which would allow him to pass into the March to defend the lands of the Church, for such an agreement, though certainly no honour would attach to it, yet in the circumstances it might easily be excused, and would not be so displeasing to the Pope, who would hear of it from Sigismondo before the Count published it, and would see that Sigismondo had done what he could to defend him. Broglio's advice pleased Sigismondo, and he determined to follow it; and to show his gratitude he appointed Messer Gaspare as his vicar in Fano, while he himself, hanging on Sforza's flank with an army of a thousand men, followed him into the Dukedom of Spoleto, where Sforza, though he was six thousand strong, finding himself opposed by the troops of the Pope and an army of King Alfonso's, was obliged to retreat somewhat hastily; and Sigismondo was able to make this as difficult as possible. In his retreat, however, Sforza took the Castle of Isola Gualterresca, near Fossombrone, but Sigismondo following him took in exchange Corinaldo and Castelnovo; and hearing that Ancona, to please the Count, had made an agreement with Venice and Florence, he fell upon it, and compelled it to return to the Pope's obedience. Then on 16th July, drawing near to La Pergola, which Sforza had given to Federigo, it surrendered, as did Monte Ghirardo and the territory of Cagli; then advancing into the Dukedom

of Urbino he took Talacchio and Colbordolo, and so harassed the Count that, fearing lest worse might befall him he retired again to Fermignano, three miles from Urbino, having accomplished nothing, but rather lost more than before.


But Sigismondo was not yet finished, for in the meantime reinforcements had reached him, therefore on the 23rd of July, with some six hundred horse and foot, he prepared at last to attack Pesaro, where Alessandro Sforza had taken refuge when Fermo fell; but because of the agreement he had made with Sforza he sent the viceroy of Naples and Giacomo da Irano thither, he himself fighting still before Urbino, when the city itself would have fallen into his hands had not his negotiations with the citizens been discovered. Yet he ever kept his eyes on Pesaro, for he thought, if Alessandro were driven out, the Pope would give him that city for his services, and to bring this about he went so far as to promise the investiture to Alessandro if he would join the Church. He, being hard pressed, consented, and on the 29th July entered the camp with his troops, presenting the Cardinal Legate with many exquisite sweetmeats. We, on our side, had traitors too, for Furlano was found to be in the pay of the Florentines, and for this was taken to Rocca Contrada and beheaded.

By this time the Count had made an attempt on Fossombrone, but, finding Sigismondo ever at his heels, managed to retreat by night to Fermignano once more; and Monte Fabbri falling to Sigismondo, and the army of the Church being now some fifteen thousand strong, there was no place left for Sforza to rest in save Urbino itself; therefore, all the month of August, Sigismondo made war on that place, but though some places by force, and others by agreement, fell into his hands, he did not take the city. He was back again in Rimini on 12th September to receive Luigi, the Patriarch, Legate of the Pope, who was returned from Rome; and

Sigismondo received him with every sort of splendour—the Bishop, Clergy, and people going to the gates to meet him, and to conduct him to the house of the Roelli in the Contado di S. Croce, which Sigismondo no longer used, for the Rocca was finished.

These festivities were, however, interrupted by rumours of the arrival of reinforcements for Sforza, so that Sigismondo, hearing that Monteluro was besieged, and knowing that Broglio was there with but seventy men, set out immediately. When Federigo heard of his arrival he sent him a challenge, but Sigismondo, remembering that his own had come to nothing, answered the Duke that, had he been Captain-General of Sforza's army, he could not have refused him, but that, since he was not, while he himself was in command for the Church, he would not meet him, as his own death would leave the army without a leader. Nevertheless, he hoped that in the battle they might meet, that he himself was ever in the van, and if Federigo sought him he could easily find him there. In the meantime Broglio and his men, being hard pressed, and having held Monteluro for six days, seeing that the inhabitants of that place were negotiating with the enemy, found themselves compelled to surrender, which they did, not without difficulty saving their lives, for Sforza was desperate.

Yet about this time we had good news, for we all heard that the Milanese had been defeated by the Venetians; and Sforza in particular was glad to hear this, for he knew that thus Cremona was safe, and at the same time he expected that the Duke, being in trouble in that quarter, would before long come to agreement with him. Thus the war here began to languish, for, now that the end seemed to be in sight, and Sforza began to turn his gaze more and more on the Dukedom, the Patriarch was shy of losing in one day of misfortune what had been gained so hardly—to wit,



the March. Therefore Sigismondo before the 11th of October returned to Rimini; while the army went into quarters among the hills at Covignano and other places, the Patriarch going to Russi. But the war was not finished yet, for on 17th October we heard that the Count, having dissolved the truce with Sigismondo, was attacking Gradara, hoping to take it for his brother, who expected to hold Pesaro; but Sigismondo had foreseen this move, and had already garrisoned the fortress with his best soldiers. Nevertheless, he went thither at once, and all day on horseback he, without ceasing, encouraged the defenders, turning back with his troops every attempt of the enemy, and introducing food and reinforcements when he could. And thus the siege continued for forty days; while the Count grew more and more furious that the best of his own troops and of the Urbinese were unable to take that place from Sigismondo, who was alone, since the Papal troops were already in winter quarters. Then was seen the genius of our Lord, for he had placed *bombarde* and *briccole* in the fortress, which ceased not, night and day, to throw great stones into the enemy's camp, and to confuse them utterly. But again affairs in Milan interfered, for the Duke appealed to the Pope to make peace between him and Sforza, so that the Dukedom might not be left to the mercy of the Venetians; and the Count was disposed that way too.


Now Sigismondo knew how to draw advantage from all this. He sent Nicolò di Benzo to Lombardy with troops, so that the Count, seeing how things were going, might cease to make war on him. And the Duke, seeing his advantage, wrote to Sforza, saying he could not think him sincere in his wish to help him so long as his war with us prevented Sigismondo coming to Lombardy with his own troops and those of the King. If, however, he would raise the siege of Gradara, he, on his part, would enter into negotiations with

him for a complete reconciliation. The Count, seeing that he was only likely to do himself harm by continuing the siege, and because the winter was already come, and the weather very severe, so that the campaign became every day more difficult, raised his camp, and on the 27th November, with his wife, Madonna Bianca, went to join Alessandro in Pesaro; and Sigismondo let him go.

The fear of losing Gradara having been taken from him Sigismondo immediately got ready to go to Lombardy, whither the Duke was urging him to come with all speed. And after eight days he set out in the company of the Viceroy of Naples Cesare Martinengo, Giacomo da Santo Gemini, and other captains, with their gay and splendid troops and the greater part of his own men; but when he arrived winter had already checked the Venetians.

Every sort of honour was lavished on Sigismondo by the Duke, who, wishing to humiliate Sforza, as Sigismondo saw, as much as to obtain the services of our Lord, offered the generalship of his troops to Sigismondo. But he, who had only sought to bring about the reconciliation of the Duke and Sforza in order to free himself from a dangerous enemy, would not accept this honour, fearing the jealousy of Sforza, but instead agreed to return to Romagna to push on the negotiations, so that Sforza himself might go to Lombardy.

It was the end of January when, with only fifty horsemen, he left Milan for Rimini.



XIII

Now, by what means I know not (but the means matter little), Astorge Manfredi of Russi, a friend of Federigo's, a man with the soul of a cat, who hated Sigismondo as vainly as he hoped for salvation, heard that our Lord with but fifty men would pass not far from his city, and thinking it safe enough to attack fifty, and they weary, for the ways were bad and the weather wintry, determined to take Sigismondo prisoner, and to make sure of him he kept watch, and when our Lord had passed into his territory he closed the passes, and going out himself with his well-armed cut-throats, a hundred and one strong, he awaited Sigismondo and his company in hiding near the Castle. But many things that had befallen that day had set our Lord on his guard; for one, his horse had gone lame; for another, a friar had forborne to curse him when refused an alms, saying that would be accounted for; for a third, his secretary had told him of a battle of magpies and jackdaws. Therefore, suspecting some evil chance, when he rode into the signoria of Manfredi, whose hate he knew, he ordered his men to ride so that only four went in front while all the rest followed in a body, save two who remained with him a good way behind.


Now when the four first came by the place where Astorge lay in wait they were stopped by eight men a-horseback, who inquired where their Lord might be; and they answered he was coming up close behind them, so they passed on; but, when the main body came up, a hundred men armed, with Astorge among them, sprang out upon the company, thinking indeed that Sigismondo was there. But

Sigismondo, hearing the noise of the fight, for our men were not sleeping, nor, as I know, slow to anger, he knew that a snare had indeed been set for him, and that to advance or retreat with the passes closed (and that struck him on the instant) would be in vain.

Now hard by was a marsh surrounded by a thick wood, and since with him to think was to act he plunged in there, and dismounting abandoned his horse, threw off his cuirass and all his heavy harness, and, in scanty dress, waded through the bog, seeing no other way of safety.

By this time Astorge had managed to take the greater part of our men prisoners, and seeing that Sigismondo was not among them, nor dead by the wayside neither, he ordered his men with the dogs to pass through the marsh, so that they hunted after Sigismondo as though he were a wolf or a wild boar. But he, hearing the barking of the dogs, hid himself under water up to his head, and remained thus for an hour, when, night falling and all being silent, he dragged himself, not without difficulty, to dry land. Meanwhile Manfredi, disappointed, apologising for what had happened, let his prisoners go free, and returned to his Russi.

When it was quite dark Sigismondo, arguing that Astorge would not wish to pass a night in the open at that season, came out of the wood, and understanding the movements of the stars (and I thank Madonna of Trivio that I taught him the art), reasoned from these whither he could turn for safe refuge. So, leaving those puddles, with great difficulty he came at last to Ravennate; and seeing a house where a little light was burning he knocked there, and found a poor peasant, who, with his wife and daughters busy spinning, was passing the long night watching over a fire of a few logs. Having come in among them, in order not to excite suspicion by his appearance at that time of the night,



his foul dress, and bare feet, he told them he was a prisoner who by great fortune had escaped from the Signore of Rimini, and begged them for the love of God to show him the way that very night to Bagnacavallo, or some other place of the Marchese of Ferrara, for on his arrival he hoped to reward him for his services better perhaps than he thought. The peasant, partly touched by his entreaties, partly enticed by this promise, at last brought him to a place, where lived Signor Miliade, a brother of the Marchese. As soon as this gentleman saw him he recognised him, and, bringing him into his home, kept him with him some days, so that he might recover from his sufferings; then having rewarded the peasant, and given our Lord armour, a horse, and servants, and all else that he needed, he bade him good-bye, bidding Count Luigi del Verme accompany him to the border of the state, so that on 7th February Sigismondo came home to Rimini.

How can I tell our delight at seeing him again? For indeed all the city thought him dead, save Madonna Isotta, and she believed him alive only because she dared not think otherwise.

And having seen Francesco Sforza, and received for the Duke his promise to go to Lombardy with his army in the spring, Sigismondo, convinced of his sincerity, returned to Milan. About the time of his departure the articles of peace between the Count, the Lord of Pesaro, and Federigo on the one part and Sigismondo and Novello on the other, were signed in Rimini; and before the middle of March Sigismondo, having promised the Duke Sforza's service, led back his own troops from Lombardy, and, coming to Rimini, published the peace that he had signed with Sforza and Federigo.

XIV

A NATURE like that of Sigismondo, containing in itself, as I have said, both something of the spirit of an age that save in such country places as Rimini is almost passed away, and something too of the intellectual energy that is characteristic of our own time, could not be wholly content with fighting, however successful he might be. There were instincts wholly, or almost wholly, physical in his nature it is true, but that intellectual activity that was at least as much his own could not for ever be satisfied with the making of a few indifferent verses to Madonna Isotta, or the random meeting with some old scholar who, on his way may be from Byzantium to Venice, Florence, or Rome, passed by chance through Rimini. The advent of Messer Vittore Pisano just before the fall of Rocca Contrada, the delight our Lord found not only in his almost miraculous art, but in his conversation, in the mere presence of one who seemed to have stamped the very world about him, the life that eddied round him with the impress of his style, stimulated in Sigismondo a desire that, since his first visit to Florence had never wholly passed away, to surround himself with scholars and artists, to pass such time as he could spare from political business in their company, and through them, and through the poets that little by little he was gathering about him, to immortalise himself and his deeds, that without them, as he knew, in spite of their splendour, must assuredly pass away. For it was one of the most characteristic traits in Sigismondo's character to believe that his deeds were worthy of immortality; nor was this extraordinary preoccupation with himself

wholly without charm or strange at that time. Had not Marchese Leonello employed Messer Vittore Pisano continually to carve his image, not once nor twice but many times? And then there was so much to say!

So when at length Messer Vittore betook himself to Ferrara by way of Mantua, the Marchese Leonello, being impatient lest he should stay with us too long, at the earnest request of Sigismondo, who saw he must let the Master go, he promised to send us a kind of pupil or follower of his, Messer Matteo da Pasti, who, if we wished it, as he said, would remain with us, and devote himself wholly to our affairs; and indeed not long after he came to us.

Among that crowd of poets, painters, engineers, doctors, and quacks who presently were to be found at our court, there were many who were mere adventurers, a sort of wandering pedlars who display their wares at every street corner and content only the foolish. Messer Matteo was not among these, for he was a good artist, full of versatility, but without the genius of Messer Vittore; nor may I count as a quack or an adventurer Messer Valturio, my friend, who loved the art of war and the engines thereof; nor Messer Basinio of Parma neither, who, though he sang not so well as Virgil, yet was a man full of humanity, who loved Sigismondo well; but there were others who made Rimini gay enough but added nothing to our reputation. Now long since Sigismondo had taken the measure of these cuckoos, and though he liked to have a crowd about him they deceived him not; for if that immortality he desired, so nobly as I think (for indeed glory is the one thing left to us that is not altogether material), depended upon them, then indeed he was most mortal, and oblivion threatened him as a cloud threatens the sun, leaving no trace of its shining splendour.

Talking with me somewhat in this strain one day, just

before Messer Vittore departed, himself too on the eve of departure, a little sorry to go, and altogether sad at the departure of the medallist, something that I let fall in our conversation brought Messer Leon Alberti to his mind, that marvellous, sweet, and grave nature that had so captured his imagination years ago in Florence, and turning to me suddenly he said: "If I could bring Leon Battista here I would build the church I vowed to our Lord not long ago in battle." And I, eager too to know more of that strange modern philosopher, encouraged him in this, so that he wrote at once to Florence before he set out, for he was to depart on the next day, and bade me send him word what answer Messer Leon Battista sent him.

No long time after, a little weary of those indefatigable poets who clustered round Madonna Isotta, who was herself a better poet than any among them, and wearier still of the fantastic courtiers who besieged Madonna Polissena, made love to her ladies, quarrelled with the poets, lived on our Lord, and abused his servants, I had gone one morning along the Via Aemilia, and after a time, leaving the highway, had climbed a little hill for the sake of the view. What a tempest there had been not three days ago! You might have thought the world was about to end, so terrible was the lightning, so furious the rain; and now, after so small an interval, had come a serenity of weather that had lasted till that day.

Thinking much concerning this miracle, for how much wider is the whole circle of Heaven than I know, than I can express, on my way homeward towards sunset I came to a little house by the highway where a woman was hushing her child to sleep in her arms. Taken with the faint music of her song I stood a little way off to listen, for indeed in such a common sight as that I have learned to find a sort of parable of life, a secret, which, rightly understood,

holds, though hidden, the whole, and more than the whole, of our philosophy. The song she sang was an old one, such as humble people know, but not the less sweet on that account, and indeed in the fading beauty of the evening the words seemed to gather a new meaning from the mere humanity of that homely scene that all the painters have so loved—a mother hushing to sleep her little son.

Softly in the clear evening air the words came to me, bringing I know not what remembrance of things I have perhaps overlooked or forgotten too soon :

“Di’ Maria dolce, con quanto disio
Miravi ’l tuo figliuol Cristo mio Dio.

Quando tu il partoristi senza pena
La prima cosa, credo, che facesti,
Sì l’adorasti, O di grazia piena,
Poi sopra il fien nel presepio il ponesti;
Con pochi e pover panni lo involgesti
Maravigliando e godendo, cred’io.

O quanto gaudio avevi e quanto bene
Quando tu lo tenevi nelle braccia!
Dillo, Maria, che forse si conviene
Che un poco, per pietà mi satisfaccia:
Baciavil tu allora nella faccia,
Si ben credo, e dicevi: O figliuol mio!¹

¹ “Tell me, sweet Mary, with what longing
Didst thou behold thy son Christ my God.

When thou brought’st him forth without pain,
The first thing, I think, that thou didst,
May be, was to worship him, O full of grace,
Then on the hay in the manger thou laid’st him,
In few and poor clothes thou folded’st him,
Marvelling and rejoicing, I think.

O how glad thou wast, and how happy,
When thou held’st him in thine arms!
Tell me, Mary, what, may be, thou mayest,
That thou mayest satisfy me a little for pity:
Thou kissedst him then,
I think indeed, and said: ‘O my little son!’

Quando un poco talora il dì dormiva,
 E tu destar volendo il Paradiso
 Pian, pian andavi, che non ti sentiva,
 E la tua bocca ponevi al suo viso ;
 E poi dicevi con materno riso :
 —Non dormir più che ti sarebbe rio.

Ma nulla ho detto, e tutto è una frasca. . . .”¹

Suddenly I was aware that someone had come up on the grass by the wayside behind me, and was listening too. It was a figure of a grave almost a weary beauty that met my gaze when, for all the tears were in my eyes, I turned and recognised Messer Leon Battista Alberti himself, who, leading his horse by the bridle, had thus found me, and now laid his hand, already full of flowers, on my shoulder, and gave me greeting.

“So you too are fond of country music,” said he, smiling, “and for once at least have allowed yourself to be really moved by such a homely thing. Well, well, I have found a companion.” Then more gravely he added: “But they are rogues, these peasants, rogues and cheats. Messer Vespasiano Bisticci was not far wrong when he said there were two species of men difficult to bear with on account of their ignorance—to wit, servants and peasants. Signore, I am a landowner—it is my fate ; for, on the one hand, my health forces me to live often in the country ; and, on the other, I love everything that grows there save the peasants, and I

¹ When sometimes by day he slept a little,
 Thou, waking, wishing to have again thy Paradise
 Softly, softly came, that he should not hear thee,
 And placed thy mouth on his cheek,
 And said then with a mother’s smile :
 ‘To sleep no longer that would be bad for thee.’

But I have said nothing, and all is a tale. . . .”

cannot well tell you what I have suffered at their hands. But I tire you," he continued, looking around. "Where is your horse? I promise to complain no more if you will give me your company to Rimini."

Then I told him I was afoot, and he answered: "I foresee, sir, that we shall be friends, for we have the same tastes. I have met no other in my life who cared to walk abroad when he might ride—save myself," he added softly, "save myself."

"But," I said, "you too with the rest then think of the peasants as barbarians, or at best fit only to form the background to a fantastic love tale in the manner so much in fashion——"

"Ignore," said he, interrupting me, "they are worse than barbarians; for you may overcome the barbarian, but who shall cope with a peasant? Yet truly I have heard ours in Italy lead a better and more human life than those of other countries." And without waiting for a reply he added: "Let us go on towards the city, for indeed the evening is sweet, and I shall be glad of your company." So we went on together, he leading the horse.

"You may well believe that our contadini are more fortunate than those of other countries," said I, for I thought him too hard on people I have ever found simple and honest as men go. "In Germany, where I was some years since, I found the peasant a slave, starved by his master, crippled by toil in that brutish earth, a wretched and God-forsaken serf calling upon death to free him from his misery; while his wife, not like our contadine with their boxes of trinkets, their Sunday damask, their proud and yet homely ways, was a mere female beast, half woman half brute, more grotesque than her husband. In the evenings by the vague roads you might see her surrounded by her brats, crouching like a witch over a poor fire, on which was a pot boiling, in the

mud hovel that is her home. Yet even from these people utterly debased and broken I have received kindness."

"Ah! you know not our Tuscan rogues," he said, smiling at me; "for with us if one would be happy in the country it is best not to traffic with them at all, or, since that is impossible in Tuscany, to deal only with a few families."

"But why should it be impossible in Tuscany if it be possible here?" I asked.

"For this cause," said he, "that in that marvellous country all things grow together, and the system of farming is such that the landowner dwells in his farm with the *contadino*, who cultivates the soil and as wages takes a portion of that which his labours have produced. And I call it a marvellous country, because, as you know, to grow good wine hills are necessary, and a place full of sunshine too. To grow grain to perfection you want an open plain, a soft, a light soil; while the best wood is only to be found in stony and rough ground, and hay in a land that is sweet and moist."

"And do you find all this in Tuscany?" I asked.

"How many other places there may be in that country I know not," he answered somewhat sadly; "but I often remind myself of our *poderi* close to Florence, those of Messer Benedetto, of Messer Nicolino, of Messer Cipriano, of Messer Antonio, and others of my family—places full of nimble air, in a laughing country of sweet and lovely views, where there is always fresh water and everything is healthy and pure; for there are no fogs there, and seldom cold or violent winds. . . . But let me not speak of these, let me not remind myself of the magnificence of the Alberti, for it is forgotten, and some of those farms, as though in sorrow, desiring the old *padrone*, have gone to ruin." He was silent for a time, lost in thought.

Then I, to relieve him of his sadness and the remembrance

of the ruin of his family, besought him to tell me more of these rascal peasants he spoke of and their ways.

"It might seem incredible," said he after a minute, "how one growing up among the clods should be so cunning a rogue; yet so it is, for he is able to deceive a lawyer. Always he will cheat thee in some way or other. First, he will wish you to buy him oxen, goats, and pigs, then a mare, or again sheep. Next, he will come to you, whining that his creditors are about to destroy him, and you must satisfy them; then you must dress his wife, who is not fit to be seen, or give dowries to his daughters, whom otherwise he cannot marry. He is worse than a poor relation, for presently he will demand that you set his cottage in order, or rebuild the *podere*, or buy him new tools or furniture. Above all, he is always grumbling, and when he prospers (as he often does) more than his padrone he still complains, and will swear he is a poor man, always in want of something, nor will he prevent you going to any unnecessary expense or trouble. If the crops are abundant he reaps the two best parts for himself; if through bad weather or some other cause the year is sterile you will bear all the damage and loss: thus of good things he always has the best, while the evil falls all to you."

"What is it then," I asked, "that you find so sweet in the country, since those who live there appear to you so despicable and wearisome?"

He was silent for a moment, while a bird sang not far away, then turning to me:

"It is the country itself that I love," he said—"the true business of the country, the walk through the olive gardens to the farm, the management and even the buying of the cattle, the sowing and reaping of the grain, the joy of taking up great handfuls of it as though one were indeed a judge of its worth—the delight of all that! Then one may watch

the seasons there as never in a city, and understand in some dim way the life of plants and trees, those consoling things that some have thought of as dead and silent, but whose voices you may hear, if you will, even on the stillest day, or laughing in the wind, or whispering together in fear at the approach of the storm, or shrill with agony in the tempest. And with these I shall ever claim brotherhood, for I seem to understand that in some sort they are even as I am, so that looking on the autumn fields ready for harvest, or the flowers in spring, I have found myself in tears, I know not rightly why, save that I recognise that I too am sprung from this same earth and shall return to it again."

He was silent again; and then, seeing I heard him gladly, he began to speak of the refinement, comeliness, and joy of life in the country with one's family; the business of teaching children and young people the names and natures of various animals, flowers, and trees; the music of the country too, those strange love songs that the girls might learn for the lute, and that he thought might well be caught up into a nosegay of verses to make a fair poem. Then the books that should be read there, in the sweet leisure—Greek and Latin writers too difficult amid the distractions of town; the delight of the cool house in the heat while the fountains splash in the court, and the bees murmur together in the shade, and the great green beetles sleep in the white lilies, and the cicada chatters among the olives and corn.

Yes, certainly it was a sort of physical delight one found in all that, a delight that, as I told him, it may be only a townsman could have discovered there. But I caught a lesson from what was then said, of tranquillity of life; for in the villa you might find all useful, honest, and reasonable things, and even the cunning of the peasant might be useful to you, for thereby you would be taught to bear with men, and so brought into closer contact with your fellows. Then

into what a courtesy it brought you with yourself: the infinite solace of lawns, flowers, odours, songs that are always glad, filling you with hope; and if this is so in spring or summer, in winter you may find sun there when the city is dismal perhaps; nor with the falling leaf does she cease to be liberal, for she sends you wood for a fire, and thus gives you unknowing all the delights of winter; the hours by the fireside, when you may have her junipers and laurels for a blaze and a sweet odour since the snow and wind have driven you indoors.

That conversation, so informal, so light-hearted, so full of humorous complaint, resolved itself at last into praise of country life: the quiet of all that, with its airy, pure, frank days, with beautiful things always near you—the wooded hills for instance, the green valley, the clear and cool fountains, the laughing streams that run by gamboling and losing themselves among the tufts of grass, the rocks and undergrowth, all day long in the summer heat—the mere delight amid such familiar scenes and sounds of reading difficult or beautiful books, or of watching children at play, or the girls at work in the fields, the young men in the vineyards. Certainly it was with an impression in my mind of the necessity, the beauty of an orderly and frank life amid such things, the refreshment that the soul might gather from them, that our conversation came to end as we entered the city at last, later than we had thought, finding the gates shut, so that, as though to confirm all that Messer Battista had said, we found it necessary to turn out the guard that we might go to our house.

XV

DURING the days which followed before the return of Sigismondo I spent much time in Messer Battista's company, coming at last to love one who, I had in some way divined, was full of distinction and of a noble and fine heart, even from the first. And at last, in those long rambles in the country which delighted him so much, in conversation that lasted sometimes far into the night, gradually little by little, with infinite difficulty, I learned something of the story of his life, that unfortunate and yet consoling tale which later I wrote down for the delight of Sigismondo. For little by little, as I say, I became aware that this subtle, grave, and, as it were, universal spirit must have been ever the first among the young men of his age, that even from his youth he had mastered all things, which become one of noble birth, of a rare and liberal education. For in those days as now he was fond of horses, of the use of arms and instruments of music; he devoted himself eagerly to letters, to the study and practice of the arts too; nor was there anything rare and difficult that he did not seek to master almost with a sort of fury, till by study and meditation he learned all those things by which praise is won. To name but two among them, in modelling and painting he was tireless, wishing to gain the good opinion of the wise in such matters; and then his natural wit was such that, as I know, he may be said to have mastered all the arts. Neither ease nor idleness could affect him. And when he had once given himself to anything he knew not weariness. Ah! how often I have heard him say that the summit of all human delight

is to be found in literature. And indeed he so rejoiced in it that neither hunger nor sleep could separate him from books, which were to him as buds of sweet-smelling flowers. And such was his eagerness that I have heard the letters would cluster like scorpions under his eyes till at last he could read no more. So when he was thus weary he would fly to music or painting or physical exercise, and they would restore him. He would play *palla*, or run or wrestle or dance, or throw the dart, but all these he did rather for his health's sake than for pleasure or solace, yet he has told me above all he loved to climb difficult mountains.

As a boy, and this I heard in Florence, he was famous in soldierly exercises, so that, with joined feet, he would jump over the shoulders of grown men; and in jumping with the pole he had no equal; while an arrow shot by him, though he drew his hand no farther than his shoulder, would penetrate the strongest iron cuirass, such force it had. Many were the stories in Florence concerning him—to wit, how that, with his left foot against the wall of the Duomo, he would throw an apple high above the topmost roofs; or how in some church he would throw a small coin of silver with such force into the air that those who stood by him heard it strike the vault. On horseback too who might equal him? for with his hand he would keep the point of a cane on his foot; and thus he would gallop up and down for a long time, but the cane would not have budged. And then (truly rare and marvellous), the wildest horses, who would not suffer any to mount them, at his word, nay, only looking upon him, became quiet, trembling a little as though afraid. He learned music without a teacher, yet his compositions pleased masters. All his life he practised singing, but at home or alone especially in the country, with his brother or his relations; and he took pleasure too in the organ, and was held to be

among the first on that instrument; while by following his advice many became expert musicians.

At last as he grew older, laying aside all things else, he gave himself to letters, and to ecclesiastical and civil law, the which he studied so continuously and tirelessly that he fell gravely ill. And indeed his state became such as to move all to pity; yet he found it not, for his relations seem to have been indifferent to him, and even unkind. And so, in order to find some consolation during his convalescence, though at that time he was not yet twenty years old, he wrote the *Philodoxios*; and then as soon as he was well he again devoted himself to those studies of law which he had begun, suffering the while fatigue and poverty, so that he again fell ill, and was scarcely able to leave his bed, so feeble and thin was he, while darkness gathered before his eyes and his ears were filled with strange noises. And the doctors being called told him that he had wearied himself, and advised him to abandon his studies; but he would not heed them, till at last overwhelmed by nausea, no longer able to remember the names of his most intimate friends, but only to recall what he had seen, he was forced to abandon those studies—to wit, law—which had tired him most.

But he could not live without study, therefore at twenty-four years of age he began to examine physics and mathematics, nothing doubting that he might pursue those arts which required, as he said, rather intellect than memory. It was at this time that he wrote for his brother the *De Commodis Literarum, atque Incommodis*, where so many of his thoughts concerning literature may be found; and for his own pleasure too at this time he wrote many shorter works, *Ephebia*, *De Religione*, *La Deifra*, and many other such things; in verse Elegies and Eclogues and *Concioni*, and similar love poems, as a practice, or it may be for the sake of the tranquillity of heart they brought him. Then for those who

knew not Latin, and for his relations, may be in the hope of winning their affection, he wrote the three books of the *De Famiglia*; and these he wrote in Tuscan during ninety days in Rome, but at first, as he told me, they were so rough and coarse, that one could scarcely call the language Tuscan; for, owing to the long exile of his family, he had been educated by strangers, and for this cause it was most difficult for him to write in the tongue of his fatherland with any sweetness or force. Nevertheless, in a short time, with much study and diligence, he wrote so well in it that many of his countrymen, who desired nothing better than to be thought to speak well in the Consiglio, confessed that they had borrowed many ornaments from him. And besides these books, before he was thirty years old, he had written many Intercenalia, and especially those merry ones, *del Morto* and *della Vedova*, and such like, a good number of which he burnt, because he thought them not sufficiently meditated, and he did not wish his enemies to charge him with lightness; and yet, as I know, they were very humorous, and made one laugh—and, as he told me, laughter is a kind of radiance of the soul. And to those who found fault with his books I have heard him give thanks, for he enjoyed listening to criticism, thinking thus to perfect himself; nevertheless, he would say that, if his books did not give delight to all alike as he wished, he was not to be blamed, for nature does not allow any to do better than he can.


All his life he watched himself, so scrupulous was he of his honour, so that he might be not only far from blame, but even from suspicion—a hopeless wish. He himself has confessed that calumniators are the worst people one meets with, for no one can escape their poisoned darts, which wound even the greatest—and such wounds fester too. And for this cause he desired always the love of good men. To every action, he said, much attention and thought should be

given, but especially to these three—walking, riding, and speaking; and he bade men add art to art, so that no action should appear to be artful.

Nevertheless, good, peaceful, and without stain though he was, he suffered much hatred, especially from his relations; but he bore it all with a strong soul, preferring to be silent rather than to take an angry revenge, thus allowing this shame in his family to become generally known. I think nothing hurt him so much as the indifference of his family to his books, for when he gave them the *De Famiglia* but one among them all troubled even to read it.

He would go a long way to meet a wise man, and if he were near at hand would do all he could to be friends with him. Then he would question craftsmen and such—smiths, builders, shipwrights, shoemakers, and even tailors—to discover what might be peculiar or rare in their works. In money affairs he was generous to foolishness, careless of his fortune if he might benefit those in need. Yet by nature he was quick to anger, but overcame himself, and learned patience.

He would gather his friends about him, and talk of literature, at the same time painting their portraits or modelling them in wax; then he would call to him little children, and ask who it was he had painted, and if they could not tell he thought he had failed. And then—what magic he possessed—for he showed me the whole world contained in a little box—where, looking through a small hole, you might see high mountains, vast countries, and the rivers in the valleys, and then the sea and other regions too, so far off that it seemed as though the eye could scarcely pierce so far. He called these things demonstrations, and they were given in such a way that wise man and fool alike doubted whether they were paintings that he saw or the very earth itself. There were two different sorts of demon-



strations—one referring to things visible by day, and the other to those visible by night. In the latter you might see Arcturus, the Pleiades, Orion, and other bodies celestial, here the rising moon shining over the mountain-tops, and there the morning stars. In the former you might see the very rosy-fingered dawn of which Homer speaks. And I have seen the Greek sailors in Rimini, men learned in all concerning the seas, full of fear and wonder when they saw all this world caught in so small a space. For often when he asked them what they saw there they would make answer: "We behold a fleet far on the high seas. It should reach us before noon if that eastern cloud, which means a fearful tempest, does not overtake it. Now again we see the whole sea darkened and the sun gathering up the waters."

But all such things as these he preferred rather to investigate than to demonstrate, for he loved wisdom more than glory. If to some he seemed taciturn, reserved, almost morose, it was that at home he meditated upon all things he had seen abroad. In truth he was of a kindly and cheerful nature. Yet he could be severe too, especially with a charlatan, or those who made an appearance of learning, but in reality were ignorant. Thus of one of those philosophers who, hanging about Madonna Polissena, was always ready in any discussion with a number of inappropriate sentences he had learned by heart, he said: "He seems to me to be a bag filled with torn and unbound books." While to a chattering fine poet, who was ever whining of his love, Messer Leon Battista said: "At the foot of a rotten tree the garrulous frog is always at home." And when I blamed him for his indiscriminate hospitality—often he would be deceived by some worthless fellow—he answered me: "Do you not know then that a plane touches a sphere only at one point?"

He would say too that in woman lightness and incon-

stancy were gifts, really remedies for their perfidy and malice. For if women were to persevere in all they began, all man's efforts would come to nothing. He called gold the soul of work, and work the servant of pleasure. And again I have heard him say that he desired a mean in all things save patience; for patience should be cultivated to the highest point or else not at all, and even the worst things may be better borne with patience than with anger.

Such was the beautiful and great spirit of Messer Leon Battista Alberti. All that winter I spent in his company while Sigismondo was in Milan. Sometimes we would examine the churches of the city together, and often the Rocca, talking of many things. Sometimes he would read me certain pages from his *De Famiglia*, and we, who had known so little of family life, would discuss it, not without a certain humour and pathos as I have thought. Then in the spring Sigismondo returned, and certain details which awaited his decision were settled; and at last, on a showery day in March, our Lord passed in state from the Rocca to S. Francesco to attend Mass there for the last time. Later there was to be a "discorso" in the great Hall of the Rocca, in which Messer Leon Battista was to explain the plans he had made for that new Temple vowed in battle to Almighty God.

For the old Gothic church of S. Francesco, almost in the midst of the city, was about to be destroyed, or rather, as we seemed to understand, to be altogether changed into something rich and curious—the mere brick and stone of the old building remaining to be covered by the dreams of Sigismondo, the art of Leon Alberti.

On that spring morning so full of uncertain sunshine, as we passed through city and drew up at last, a gay company of cavaliers and ladies, before that old rude church in which so many of those dear to Sigismondo already lay buried, I re-



minded myself how many violations that quiet sunny piazza had suffered; for once, as it is said, a temple of Venus stood on this place which, after the coming of Christianity, had been given to Madonna, till some pedant passing by, angry that Mary should be named in such a place, destroyed it, and set up there a little chapel, which came under the invocation of S. Maria in Trivio; and this place too was destroyed later, when, S. Francesco being dead, the Franciscans took the place, and, rebuilding it, named it after the founder of their Order. And now on this same spot Sigismondo was about to build a new Temple to another Saint, one whom, as he told us, he was wont continually to invoke in battle—a thing which puzzled many at the time, who thought that he spoke of S. Sigismund, for as yet none knew that it was to Madonna Isotta, *Divae Isottae Sacrum*, that his temple was to be built. Was it perhaps some hint of this that he wished to convey to us when, reminding us of that old temple of Venus, the flower of that same company being assembled in the Court of the Rocca, Mass being over, and Messer Leon Battista about to begin his lecture, Sigismondo, smiling at Madonna Isotta, who stood beside him, turned to the company, and presenting Messer Battista to us with many friendly words added, as though by way of explanation: “To raise the dead—that is what we are trying to do.”

To raise the dead! but Messer Leon Battista would not have it so. “Not to raise the dead, but rather to awaken the living,” he began; and certainly, among much that was abstruse, difficult, or merely technical, this was the refrain, as it were, that ran through his whole discourse. For as was his custom in discovering the plans he had made, while he explained to us in what way he proposed to carry out certain ideas of Sigismondo, how as by a miracle he had solved the problem of changing so old and barbarous a place into a beautiful building in the modern manner, so that the façade,

for instance, so bare and desolate now, would compose itself under his hands into a great central door in the manner of the arch of Augustus, flanked on either side by similar smaller arches divided by beautiful pillars, on which would rise a pediment in the classic manner, and over all a great dome as beautiful as any in Italy, out of Florence, he contrived to introduce into his discourse many valuable thoughts about life, about our life here in Italy. For in thus changing an old rude church, full of a sort of mystery and twilight, into the beautiful and temperate building he described for us, he seemed to suggest that he was after all but imitating the work of God with regard to the world of men. The old building would remain then really as it always had been, only where the windows had been filled with glass painted with all kinds of fantastic thoughts and figures he would let in the sun, so that we might see more clearly everything that lay around us. And then where there had once been only the harsh brick, now there should be precious marbles carved with figures; and where once there had been twilight, or even darkness, now there should be light. Yes, he seemed to suggest that just that was the most valuable thing he could give us—light instead of darkness; a real spaciousness such as the pagan builders loved; a true sense of the proportion of things—of living things too, and even of the dead. Not to awaken those who rested from their labours in the earth from which they sprang, but to rouse the living—if we caught his meaning aright, for it was difficult to explain very clearly the thoughts which came to one about so hard a subject—it was that he had tried to do. For even as long ago, not so long ago perhaps as one might have come to think, those whom we believed but sleeping had seemed to haunt us, had oppressed us by their continual presence about us, though we saw them not, so that in those old twilight churches we had come to fear them almost, and to dread

their restless ghosts, so now we were in danger of a new tyranny of the dead, of the ancients, under which there would be no room for our own thoughts, since they had solved once and for all (there lay the danger) every problem; and all we might do was to imitate them, to repeat their words, to copy their art, to quote their thoughts, and since they had bowed to authority we too must be ready to suffer tyranny, and not least that of themselves. And to this difficult saying, difficult for me at least, he added: "Man knows enough when he knows what he knows, can do enough when he can do what he can, has enough when he has what he has. For when a city is made sure against foreign foes there are yet left those within the city, even as when the devil is far off from us still our hearts are restless." This being so then, if we found ourselves disheartened we were to think upon the greatest and sweetest and most consoling things in the world. Splendour? Ah! splendour had the strength of fire—burning up the heart. Not to raise the dead, but to awaken the living; for the greatest of all human things was Hope, the least, that which is betwixt life and death, the sweetest to be loved, the most liberal, the most consoling Time.

The discourse, half lecture, half a sort of mental dialogue, came to an end amid a round of applause, that gay company crowding round the artist to congratulate him and ask him questions. In the confusion I made my way out, a little anxious to put my thoughts in order.

That tyranny he had spoken of—the tyranny of the ancients—what was it? Just as in old days, not so long ago, he had said, the dead and their thoughts compassed us

round and enslaved us, so to-day we were in danger of the tyranny of the ancient world. Well, but just in that ancient world, as it seemed to me, lay our safety, our emancipation from those dead thoughts which had overwhelmed us for so long. And then, if he refused to follow the ancients, how was it that, in this very church he was building, he had learned from them, copied them almost, taking for his façade the design of the arch of Augustus?

It was long before I had an opportunity of speaking with him alone; for Sigismondo took all his time, and scarcely permitted him to leave him. But on the day before he departed, as it happened, I found him quite by chance sitting alone in the shade of an ilex-tree, among the flowers, on a little hill not far from the sea. He greeted me with much kindness, and bade me sit down beside him. After a time, in which he spoke of trivial things, I ventured to ask him concerning that tyranny of the ancients of which he had spoken in his discourse. "For surely," said I, "they were our masters, and one can do no better than learn from them."

"Learn from them—yes, truly," said he, "if one may—but to imitate them, I think indeed, is only for poetasters, bad painters, and they who know not how to build or to think for themselves; for who that may drink of the stream will not pass by the pool, or who that can drink of the fountain will not pass by the cup?"

"And the stream and the fountain," said I—"what may they be in this parable?"

"Nature," said he softly. We were both silent for a little; then after a time I said to him: "Many things seem to be clear to me now which before were hidden. For now I know why my heart beats more quickly when I look over the sea and when I behold the spring flowers, but till now I have not been able to understand."

"Look you," said he, "there are as great men now as

in old time, though they be changed; only the sun and the hills and the sea change not, but remain as they were long ago. We are born, we grow up, we think we learn well or ill how to live, truly we learn only how to die. Rome is founded, and grows and rules the world, and is destroyed and passes away, till there is but the shadow of a ruin where she was. Christ is sung by the angels in Bethlehem, and dies on the Cross, and the whole world by these two facts is changed from what it was before. Only Nature changes not, and is ever beautiful and full of peace. Those clouds over there like the great wings of birds are like those Ulysses looked on; that tree about to burst into blossom has, it and its sisters, for thousands of years gladdened the heart of the husbandman; the same flowers run to-day in the valley of Enna as when Hades raped Persephone; the same shadows pass over the hills there, the same waves still beat upon the rocks. Is it not of these things after their fashion that the ancients have told us; and since they remain, why should we not speak too our own thoughts concerning them? We bear in us the germs of a universal life.

“And again, if only those who may be said to have lived are they who have written learned books in Latin, or translated the thoughts of another from the Greek, through this the world will be divided into two parts—those who are cultivated and those who are not. And this will be a spiritual difference, whereas before the difference was material, a difference of birth or chance.”

“But,” said I, for indeed this last seemed to me fantastic, “there has always been such a difference between the civilised and the barbarian.”

For a time he said nothing; then at last, turning towards me with that rare smile on his lips, he said: “I have sometimes thought that perhaps there are no more any barbarians in the world, for each man alike has within him

that which is wisdom, and if it be not in the tongue, it is in the heart." After a minute he went on: "You yourself, Messere, were speaking not so long since of those poor wretches in Germany, those serfs who are scarcely human as you thought, a mere clod of earth shaped like a man, but therefore more terrible than the beasts and only less brutal than the brute earth. Yet you told me even from this serf you had received kindness. Well, I too in my youth was in Germany. Yes, I remember it very well; I was unhappy so far from my native land, for even as a child I was an exile. Well, among these people too, even the lowest of them, I have found nobility of heart, unselfishness, generosity."

We rose up. "Let us walk," said he, "for I am weary of thinking." Leaving the highway we came presently to a little wood, which, still in silence, we were about to enter, for everywhere little paths invited us to follow them, when suddenly in the wind that stirred now and then among the trees we heard voices, the fresh, shrill voices of young women, whom at first we could not see.

"Pick that one—pick that one," I heard; then more eagerly:

"Look at this! Look at this!"

"What is it? It is a lily."

"The violets are over here."

"I have found the roses—ah! whole masses of them."

"Pick them—pick them! they are so fair and amorous."

"Ah me! what a thorn pricks me."

"Ah! and me too; how it hurts!"

"Ah, ah! what is that jumping?"

"A cricket—a cricket!"

"Come here—come here! pick these mushrooms."

"Those are not mushrooms, my dear."

"Yes; they are."

"These or those?"

Then another called from farther away :

"Come here—come here for a moment—I have found some sweet thyme."

"We shall stay too long," came the answer from near where we were standing; then too a lower voice :

"What a bother time is."

"It must be nearly vespers."

"Silly one, it is not yet nones."

"Listen, listen! Is that thunder?"

There was silence for a moment while all seemed to be listening; then from very far away :

"Hark, hark! I have heard the nightingale. *Più bel ve', più bel ve'.*"

"Where is it? Where is it?"

Then we heard them shaking the bushes and beating the young oaks; and presently they appeared in a clearing of the woods, six maidens, peasants, their arms full of flowers, their hair glistening with raindrops; for in spite of the sunshine a shower had overtaken us, and as they shook the bushes the wet leaves scattered them with rain.

Suddenly, as they hunted thus for that bird's voice, beating the shrubs and trees, a snake glided away in the grass in front of them.

"Oh, misfortune! Oh, dear! Oh, horror!" They were fleeing, full of fear, frightened already, and shouting to one another. Then, in their haste, what falls, what slips, what pricking of legs! We heard them calling still, and laughing, long after they were lost to our sight; while we, unaware, listening to their pleasant voices, their girlish laughter, were all wet with the rain.

In some way I cannot define I was glad our day should end with so joyful, so natural a thing as that. And as it happened that merry, unforeseen incident turned Messer Battista's thoughts towards beauty, so that on the way home-

ward he spoke of it, not as other men speak, but really personally—the thoughts he had concerning it, its value for him himself. Thus I understood that for him all beautiful things were full of delight, and especially beautiful natural things, as the laughter of children, the voices of women, the flight of birds, and all animals, splendid and fair; and they are to be loved, I gathered, not for their usefulness, but for their excellence, as are all things to which Nature has given such grace.

Then he told me that when he suffered pain he had found nothing would so soon overcome it as music, and when he was ill the sight of precious stones or flowers, and especially of beautiful landscapes, would heal him presently.

Just then we came upon a man sowing a field. As he trod the rude furrows with his bare feet, casting forth the seed with a simple and beautiful gesture, Messer Battista watched him, and I saw that he had suddenly become grave, and even sad. And at last, taking my arm, he turned away, saying:

“Let us too go back to work.” Thus in silence we came back to Rimini, and on the next day he left us.

XVI

Now while we were thus busy with our own splendour in Rimini, affairs in Italy had by no means stood still. For on 23rd February 1447 Pope Eugenius died in Rome; while King Alfonso, but fifteen miles away with his army, awaited the new election. It was said that when, a few days before the Pope's death, the Archbishop of Florence had wished to administer extreme unction, for it was thought he could not live through the night, the dying Pope made answer: "I am still strong; I know my time; when the hour is come I will send for you." And Alfonso, hearing this, exclaimed to one of his secretaries: "It is no wonder that the Pope, who has made war against Sforza, the Colonna, and myself, to say nothing of all Italy, should dare to fight against Death also."

Such was indeed Eugenius, violent, headstrong, narrow-minded, a friar, who was fitted rather to govern a convent than to rule the whole Church; yet, having lost everything, gradually he won all back again, and by the same means by which he had lost it—I mean his self-will, obstinacy, and stubbornness. He was a man of the old age, old-fashioned as we say, for he cared nothing for the new learning, and indeed had little culture. Yet he brought Fra Angelico da Fiesole to Rome to decorate his chapel; while Messer Lorenzo Ghiberti's work in Florence, those beautiful gates of S. Giovanni Battista, so awakened his wonder that on his return to Rome he employed Messer Antonio Filareti to make similar gates in bronze for S. Pietro; but Messer Antonio was, as all may see, very different from Messer Lorenzo. It is true too that Messer Poggio Branciolini, our

Messer Flavio Biondo, Messer Giovanni Aurispa, and other good scholars, were among his secretaries; but he marked them not, preferring a friar to a learned man, and the advancement of the Franciscan order to which he belonged before the advancement of learning. And indeed the Church did more for him than he for the Church; for the same divinity and marvel that hedged it round guarded him too, saving him at last from the consequences of his worst errors, and re-establishing the Papacy in the hearts of men.

All this being so, there could not but be some confusion at his death and during the election of his successor. We heard that the people of Rome had called a meeting in the convent of the Aracoeli, hoping, as Stefano Porcaro, their leader, lately Capitano del Popolo in Florence, told all the world, to obtain an agreement with the Pope such as even the smallest cities in the States of the Church had won. And some saw in this a hope for the revival of the Republic, but I was not among them. Nevertheless, men's hearts were full of some such desire, yet with King Alfonso at Tivoli, promising every day assistance to the Cardinals if need should arise, those who had set their hearts on liberty feared to move lest in one throw all should be lost.

Of the election we heard but little. First, we were told the Colonna, supported as he was by Cardinal Scarampo, would certainly be elected; but at last when the news came we found that the Cardinal of Bologna, a man of obscure birth, Thomas of Sarzana, had been chosen, thus proving once more the old saying of the Romans: "He who goes into the conclave Pope comes out a Cardinal." Thomas of Sarzana took the name of Nicolas V., in memory, as it was said, of Nicol. Albergata, some time Bishop of Bologna, who had befriended him in his youth. Now the new Pope, as I knew, was a man devoted to learning, having a great knowledge of books, for even Cosimo de' Medici consulted him about his

library; therefore it seemed to me that the times had given us their own man, and many who had been hostile to the new learning thought now that God had declared Himself on our side.

Affairs in Italy, however, imperatively demanded the Pope's attention. One of the first things he did on his election was to confirm Antonio Ordelaffi in the vicariate of *Forlì*, and, this being accomplished, Sigismondo gave to that Lord his daughter Lucrezia in marriage (she had been born to him by Madonna Gentile di Giovanni, of whom I say nothing), and this news was published in Rimini in the court of the Rocca on 16th March.


There were other and more serious affairs, however, which had to be dealt with, and of these not the least was the pacification of Italy, which on the very day of his election he had promised with God's help to bring to pass. Yet indeed the outlook promised anything rather than peace. It is true that Signor Leonello d'Este, wishing to assure the Pope of his friendship, offered him Ferrara for a conference; but the powers of Italy, while they protested their willingness to discuss affairs, intended for the most part to go no further towards peace; for the Venetians, seeing that the death of the Duke of Milan could not be far distant, were anxious to keep Sforza engaged far away in the Marca; the Florentines, jealous of the prosperity of Venice, wished to see Sforza arrayed against her; nor were they without anxiety on their own account too, for King Alfonso, urged thereto by Eugenius, and ambitious of becoming master of Italy, had begun to invade Tuscany, hoping to do that and more, seeing indeed no obstacle at all in his way, save Venice. Such were the dispositions of power in Italy when the Commissaries met in Ferrara. Yet while they seemed to desire peace all were really anxious to prolong the negotiations, especially the Venetians, who hoped thus on the death of the Duke to

become masters of Milan. For the dying Visconti, whose mistrust of everyone, and not least of Sforza, encouraged them in this dream, would not suffer the Count, who, he foresaw, would succeed him, to enter the dukedom, but ordered him instead to harry the Venetians in their own territory.

Now Count Francesco for his part, seeing that he had lost the March, and that it would be difficult, if not impossible, in the present state of affairs to win it back again, from this time set all his hopes on Milan; and being in want of money, for indeed Sigismondo had beggared him, he agreed to remove his garrison from Jesi, and to think no more of La Marca, if the Pope would pay him twenty-five thousand florins; and so it happened. Sigismondo too, thinking every hour a day while Sforza remained in his neighbourhood, also made him presents, and returned to him all the jewels and precious furniture he had pawned to defend the March; and the Duke, seeing that Sforza was to come to his side, sent him some thousands of ducats.

Thus equipped in the beginning of July, the Count set out from Pesaro, where he lodged, sending before him with a hundred horse his children and servants, and, drawn by a hundred oxen, all his engines, on the way to Lombardy. On 9th August he himself, with Madonna Bianca, in the midst of his army—six thousand strong, horse and foot—came to lodge at the end of the first day's journey at S. Giustina, five miles from Rimini, where Sigismondo with Madonna Polissena went to greet him. Nor can I tell how we rejoiced to see the last of that cunning and brutal robber; but (had we but known it!) we had not done with him yet. Four days later the Duke of Milan died, appointing as his heir King Alfonso of Aragon.

Now, on the departure of Sforza, Sigismondo thought he ought to gain something from the defeat of so great an enemy. Therefore a large number of the citizens of




Fossombrone (that city which Galeazzo Malatesta had sold with Pesaro) being discontented with the rule of Urbino, and anxious once more to come under the old dominion of the Malatesti, Sigismondo, moved by their continual exhortations, appeared on 1st September in the neighbourhood of the city with some few troops. Those within the town thinking the time was come rose up, crying: "*Muriano i Feltreschi, Vivano i Malatesti nostri antichi Signori, Viva il Signor Sigismondo.*" All might have gone well but for two mistakes which our Lord made, as Messer Gaspare Broglio has constantly told me; for it was first necessary to take the citadel, which was still in the hands of the Feltreschi, and for this Sigismondo soon found he had with him too small an army. On the other hand, whatever promises Alessandro Sforza had made to him, he ought never to have believed such a man when he swore he would not interfere in an affair that touched him so nearly. However this may be, so soon as Federigo of Urbino heard of it he sent to Alessandro Sforza requesting his help, which he gave, so that these two, advancing together, threw all their troops into the city, outnumbering our Lord two to one. Nevertheless, Sigismondo held his ground, awaiting the attack, which came presently, and lasted all day, and far into the night, under cover of which at last our Lord was obliged to retreat, being outnumbered, and holding the worse position, and having no bowmen—thus abandoning the city, which was given up to plunder.

In the meantime, the conference at Ferrara having been dissolved, all Italy was again thrown into confusion by the death of the Duke; and first we heard that the troops of Alfonso had occupied the vast citadel of Milan, and then that the Milanese, anxious for liberty, had bought them out; then that the Venetians were moving their armies thither to take it from them; while Count Francesco awaited at Cremona a favourable moment to act as opportunity offered. Rumours

were not wanting of victory and defeat; but at last we had news we could credit—to wit, that Aragon, seeing his own cause hopeless, preferred anyone to Venice as Lord of Milan, and was therefore anxious to support Sforza. And for this cause, in order to prevent the Florentines giving aid to Venice, not without the promise of assistance from some of the Sienese, he was preparing to invade Tuscany in earnest.

Now in the previous winter Sigismondo had entered the service of King Alfonso, and was therefore, as it seemed, bound to assist him, and indeed Aragon depended upon his help, as we soon learned. Nevertheless, the whole aspect of affairs had changed since the King, allied with Eugenius, the Duke of Milan, and Marchese Leonello, had taken him into his service for a year or longer, if they should both agree to prolong the *Ferma*, on the following terms:—Sigismondo was to have the title of Lieutenant-General; his army was to consist of six hundred *Lancia*, and the same number of foot. He was to receive thirty-two thousand four hundred ducats in advance for his men, fourteen thousand ducats a year for himself, together with eight ducats a month for every *Lancia*, and two for every foot soldier. On the other hand, partly urged thereto by hate of Sigismondo, partly by the entreaties of Florence, Federigo of Urbino had entered the service of the Florentines, who, now seeing themselves threatened on the one side by the King, and on the other by Sigismondo, whose fame was run through Italy, so that he was feared beyond any other General, thought they ought to do everything to detach our Lord from that enterprise, and to gain his friendship. And, to tell truth, Sigismondo was become lukewarm in the cause of Aragon, since that King had decided to support Sforza. Moreover, King Alfonso had sent him but twenty-five thousand of the thirty-two thousand four hundred ducats he had promised; and though he expended these in the King's cause they were not enough to enable him to



furnish the necessary number of soldiers, much less to give them the three months' pay already due, so that, to his dishonour, as he thought, his troops diminished daily. Therefore he sent Messer Accorso Leonardelli, who had arranged this service for him with the King, and Messer Pietro de' Gennari, one of his secretaries, to urge Alfonso to supply at least the wages of the soldiers; but they brought nothing back save words.

Now just at this time there came to our city Messer Gianozzo Manetti, the scholar, as ambassador from Florence. This famous man, whom Sigismondo had often wished to see and speak with, for he had defended the Christian Faith against both Jews and Pagans, added to a skill in negotiation and the gifts of a great orator every sort of learning, so that, as it was told us, he kept a Jew in his house with whom he spoke always in Hebrew, and more than one Greek that he might converse in that tongue also. And indeed, as I found, he was a man not only full of every sort of knowledge, but of a temperate and just judgment in all things, so that his favourite maxim was *teniamo la via del mezzo*. As though to bear witness to the temperance of his spirit, he was of good stature, neither too big nor too small, neither fat nor thin, and of most happy countenance, for he seemed ever to be smiling; only his head, which was very large, so that he could never find a *berretta* to fit him, departed from the moderation of his aspect, as of his spirit. He was grey-haired too, his hair having begun to turn white when he was nineteen, as he told me; and in this too, as in his manner of life, one may discern the anxiety of his heart for learning and those things which are of the mind. All the time he was with us he was up each morning very early, giving himself but five hours' sleep, for such was his habit. Yet he troubled no one, not even servants, by his early rising, but put on a *cioppa*, and thus studied for five hours before the rest of us

arose. He kept all the fasts, and when I spoke to him of exercise, and especially of climbing mountains, he told me that on feast days in Florence he ever went to S. Miniato al Monte for Mass, and after, if he had time (time for him being a thing of priceless value), he climbed up to the Piana di S. Giuliano to behold his beloved city.

It was this man whom, in its cunning wisdom, the city of Florence had sent to Sigismondo to win his friendship and, if it were possible, his active help against King Alfonso. And in nothing was their wisdom better shown than in this, that instead of sending us money, as they were wont to do with other Lords, Messer Gianozzo had brought in his baggage many precious copies of manuscripts. And then he trusted much to the delight of his conversation, his tales of Greece and Byzantium, his wonderful knowledge of tongues also, and the charm with which he could advance his arguments, full of surprising learning and crammed with quotations, rather than to any force in the arguments themselves. Certainly Sigismondo, who had been but lukewarm for the cause of Aragon, became cooler from day to day; yet, even while Messer Gianozzo was putting into his mind certain thoughts of joining the Florentines, he sent Messer Accorso Leonardelli once more to the King, hinting this time that he would be compelled to come to terms with others if the money agreed upon were not paid. With Leonardelli we had sent Benvenuti, who presently returned, bringing us word that the King was angered, and had not scrupled to throw Messer Accorso into prison in Castel S. Ermo.

Then Sigismondo, calling a council, asked each of us his opinion. Some declared for the Florentines, the ancient allies of the Malatesti; some thought we ought to be careful before offending so powerful a king, and that, at the least the money advanced should be returned if Sigismondo entered the service of Florence. Messer Roberto Valturio,

however, prevailed, holding that the money had already been expended in the King's service, and that Alfonso's failure to observe the agreement had saved us from the necessity of returning the money hurriedly at any rate. Moreover, he urged that the restoration of the money would not appease the anger of the King.

There was then but one obstacle left between Sigismondo and the service of Florence, but indeed that seemed insurmountable. I mean Federigo of Urbino, who was already in the pay of the Republic. Could Sigismondo fight side by side with Federigo when the enmity between them was open and declared? For the exiles from Fossombrone had, with our Lord's help, taken many places from Federigo, and had garrisoned them. Hearing this, Messer Gianozzo Manetti offered to go to Federigo and arrange matters, the which he did, with his usual success, for he was an orator beyond price.

Then Sigismondo signed the new agreement with the Florentines and the Venetians, and the same day it was published how that he had entered this service with two thousand horse, and that passage between their territories and ours was free to us and to them. Thus began the war against Aragon; yet in that year there was to be no fighting, for the King had as general only Simonetto di Castel di Pietro, who could do nothing, or very little, for even the Sienese deserted him, supplying him but very scantily with provisions, fearing to help him, since he was weak. Therefore he went early into winter quarters, near Porto Baratto, where he could obtain provisions by sea from the Kingdom.

All this time in Rimini, since the departure of Messer Leon Battista Alberti, we had been busy with the building of that Temple he had designed, a work I cannot help thinking, if rightly considered, of more importance than the wars which are gradually bleeding Italy to death, and which, for what I can see, decide nothing whatsoever.

Now since it had been decided not to build a new church, but to rebuild an old one, the mere fabric of S. Francesco was already standing, and the work of encasing it, as it were, in marble, after a new design, was proceeding apace. But Sigismondo, wishing to celebrate the great festa of the Jubilee of 1450, fast approaching, in his new Temple, decided to proceed with the chapels and interior decorations rather than with the façade or the dome. Desiring therefore above all that a chapel should be built to his saint, S. Sigismund of Burgundy, on the last day of October, the Bishop Bartolomeo de' Malatesti laid the first stone with every kind of solemnity, our Lord and all Rimini being present. Then in November Signor Antonio Ordellaffi brought his son to see little Madonna Lucrezia, his bride. They were lodged in Contrada di Croce, and many splendid festivities were given in their honour, both there and in the Rocca, which was now altogether finished, and where for some time Sigismondo, as I have said, had been living. Among others who were present at these rejoicings came Galeazzo de' Malatesti, weary of a private life in Florence, and since the death of Costanza, his wife, less attached to Sforza than of old, and for this cause, if for no other, friends with Sigismondo. He came to us from Mantua unbidden; nor were men slow to see how eagerly he courted our Lord, who used him kindly, giving him the command of a company. And, as though to prove his loyalty, on 25th January in the new year he went out, and, entering the contado of Pesaro, took the castle of Monteluro, and would have easily got possession of other places if heavy rains had not forced him to retire. Some suspicion, however, attached to his prowess, and it was thought he had taken that place rather by treason than by fighting.

On 5th February Count Francesco da Piagnano, an old adherent of the Malatesti, came to see us in Rimini; and

Sigismondo, who had spent much of the winter in Fano, preparing his army for the spring, returned to welcome him. Yet not for this alone; for not long since Madonna Isotta had borne him a son, whom they named Giovanni; nor was the disgrace to so old a family borne by Messer Francesco degli Atti and his son Antonio without resentment, for all that Sigismondo had made them his bankers. Therefore our Lord, seeking for some way to pacify them, on 28th February, in the Court of the Rocca, before all the citizens, knighted Messer Antonio, with his own sword striking him on the shoulder; while Count Antonio of Urbino gave him his spurs and Messer Pier Giovanni Brugnoli girt him with the sword. Nor was Sigismondo content with this, for he presented him with the Borghi of Razzano, and gave him three suits of cloth of gold, and three more of silk, three pieces of velvet, and a beautiful basin with cups all of silver. While in the midst of the ceremony Madonna Isotta came from our Lord's side, and gave her brother another cup of silver filled with two hundred ducats of gold.

How can I tell my thoughts of all this? I know not; for I have loved Madonna Isotta, who was learned, gentle, and strong, who loved music, poetry, and drawing, and was skilled in history and philosophy too. Was it for these things Sigismondo loved her? For indeed he had had no other aim in all his actions than to honour this lady. Yet it was not for her sake only he forgot he was a husband, but for his own; yet to her he ever returned, nor did he wear any other badge but hers only. And for this love everywhere in Italy poets sang of her, and her likeness was known to all by means of the medals Messer Matteo da Pasti had made at Sigismondo's command. That he loved her with all his heart I will not, nor cannot doubt; some tragic thing seems to lie there hidden. Often in those days I used to wonder, looking on the pale, serene, and yet eager face of Madonna Polissena,

remembering too Madonna Ginevra d'Este, when it would declare itself. Other loves he had too, less worthy, nay, rather altogether unworthy of him; yet in those days, while I divined a tragedy, I had no fear. Was he not young, full of energy and genius? Certainly it was necessary for him to express himself, for that which is evil will find expression, even as that which is good; and it seems to me that women are to be loved. If that had been all, should I have been shamed as I was, should I have been filled with remorse for him who had raised up my hopes only to dash them to pieces, so that in him I had thought of as a hero like to the men of old, a man of the old Latin race, I suddenly discerned—yes, a barbarian? No, I cannot think it. He was a man of his age, in which the dead have come to life; he was haunted by dreams; out of the dust of the innumerable ruins he threw down to build his Temple some old deity, half god, half devil, crept into his soul. Was he aware of this? Did he sometimes think he was no longer a man? Truly he believed in the stars, and their sinister influence, if indeed they govern our lives as some say, may account for what is so difficult to understand. Yet I can never reconcile in my heart him I have loved, that hero, the leader of every forlorn hope, the passionate lover of the more human learning, the builder of the fair Temple I have so loved, with him who . . . Enough, enough, I will write no more to-day.

XVII


SOME days later, while still all our world discussed that strange festa and the knighthood conferred on Antonio degli Atti, in the earliest dawn a rider thundered at our gate, demanding admittance on the business of Florence. Then we learned that King Alfonso had begun to move, and that the Florentines had already surprised Ripalbellio and some other places of little importance that had fallen into the King's hands in the last December. The order had come, and Sigismondo must set out immediately for Tuscany.

He left Rimini at the head of his troops on 8th March, not quite happy in his mind as it seemed, for sinister rumours continually reached us of some treachery on the part of Urbino. And indeed not many days later news came in earnest that the commissaries of Federigo, in spite of the treaty and the common cause in which their Lord served with ours, had seized Talacchio. Then a few days later came other news, which told that Monte Grimano, Monte Itassi, and other strongholds that stood for us in the Montefeltri, had fallen, so that we feared what might next befall. All this coming to the knowledge of Sigismondo, who, partly delayed by the weather, partly by his foreboding, was not gone far towards Tuscany, he delayed yet further, lingering near us, sending us orders for the defence of his territory and of Rimini itself if it should be necessary, bidding us take a Castle for a Castle. Then one of our condottiere, Conte da Piagnano, seeking to retake those strongholds so treacherously taken from us, discovered among the booty some letters from Federigo to his commissaries, naming

these places he hoped to take from us. With this proof of his treachery in our hands Sigismondo appealed to Florence, who, alarmed at the quarrel between their generals, sent Messer Neri Capponi to our Lord, who by that time had come to Arezzo, and refused to go farther. Messer Neri Capponi, who had already seen Federigo encamped in Pisan territory, succeeded in arranging a new peace between us and Urbino; then at last Sigismondo consented to advance to meet that traitor, which he did at Spedaletto, between Monte Scudaio and Volterra; but between him and Federigo was the army of Florence, ten thousand strong.

Florence did well to be anxious. Indeed the moment was critical, for Aragon had suddenly fallen on Piombino, besieging it by land and sea, indignant that Rinaldo Orsini, Lord of that place, had remained loyal to the Florentines, refusing him quarters in his territory. All that year King Alfonso continued the siege, hoping against hope to take Piombino; but, on the one hand, Orsini had sworn to defend it to the last man if Florence would send him aid, and, on the other, Sigismondo, at the head of his flying columns, prevented any reinforcements from reaching the King; and though assault followed assault, and mine after mine was made, towers built, and every sort of *bombarde* brought into action, sortie followed on sortie, and the flying columns of Sigismondo were so strong that at last Aragon lifted the siege, swearing to return.

How may I tell of the terror and hardship of that campaign? And indeed there is but little need, for had not Messer Basinio, who came to us in Rimini at its close, sung of it in verse? Indeed the troops on both sides suffered terribly, for the country is barren, poor, and without population, full of fever, and altogether a wilderness. Wine will not grow there, and the scarce water is bad, and for this cause more than two hundred men deserted from the king, who in the beginning



was splendidly furnished with everything save straw; but Sigismondo saw that he got no fresh provisions, whether by land or sea. It was in the midst of these privations that the virtue of Sigismondo shone brightest. He suffered fatigue, sleeplessness, thirst, hunger, and every other privation, as did the men of old. He broke the same mouldy black bread as his men, which a dog would have refused; he made a dish of acorns seem a delicious delicacy; water full of lime and sulphur he made appear as good as wine; and his soldiers followed him, singing through all that desolate, silent country, as I have heard, the poems he had made in praise of Madonna Isotta.

Thus Sigismondo hung tenaciously on the flanks of the enemy. If he were thirsty: so were they; if he were sleepless, he broke their rest with terror and alarm; if he was weary, they were wearier; he could last longer, he knew.

So at last, as I have said, Aragon was tired out, and compelled to lift the siege; then in retreat, passing through the territory of the Sienese, he entered the lands of the Church, embarking at Civita Vecchia for Gaeta, ordering his army to march back to Naples. Then, Piombino being safe, our Lord was ordered to go to Caravaggio, where the Venetians were in trouble before Sforza and the Milanese. Yet he had time to return to Rimini, whence he had been too long absent, for the siege of Piombino had endured for six months. Strange things had happened in Lombardy, whither on the 20th November Sigismondo departed with some five thousand men. In the summer the Venetians, worsted by Sforza, whom the Milanese had madly established as their Captain-General, had sent an ambassador to Florence to urge that Republic, in concert with them, to call King René into Italy, since Alfonso was their common enemy. But the Florentines, seeing that all that Venice desired was to get possession of Milan, would not agree; yet they sent Messer Gianozzo Manetti to Venice

to see what might be arranged, for, harassed as they were by Alfonso, they had so far been unable to send the Venetians any help at all, and in truth, following the thought of Cosimo de' Medici, who in his heart preferred a Dukedom in Milan to a Republic, they secretly desired the success of Count Francesco Sforza, who, as was plain to all save the Milanese themselves, aimed at nothing less than the lordship of the city.

Nevertheless, feeling themselves bound by treaty to help the Venetians, Alfonso being disposed of for the time, and Venice in grave danger from Sforza, who had retaken many cities and garrisoned them with his own troops, they decided to send Sigismondo into Lombardy, for Michele Attendolo, the Venetian general, was a weak and poor soldier, and had lately lost four thousand horse and three thousand foot in a marsh on the way to relieve Caravaggio. It was in these circumstances that Sigismondo entered the service of Venice. Nor were rumours wanting of other strange happenings; for it was said that Count Francesco was already suspected by the Milanese, who for this cause wished to come to an agreement with Venice; while Sforza, who had heard of it, had already made, as we heard, a secret compact with the Republic, by which he entered their service.

Meanwhile all the powers of Italy on the other side of the Po as well as the Venetians had entered the struggle, hoping to aggrandise themselves at the expense of the Dukedom. Then came news indeed, for we heard that the Count had allied himself with Venice, and would permit the troops of the Republic to enter Crema, and to recover the territory they had held about Bergamo and Brescia.

On 30th January 1449 then, without any regard for the season, Sigismondo left the territory of Brescia, where he was encamped to enter Crema; but he thought it better first to acquire the other lands of Giaradadda, so he seized Trevino,

in spite of the difficulty of the country, which the season made worse, supplies having to be brought by oxen from Brescia; and even so it was impossible to get hay for the horses, so that he had to give them vine-tendrils pounded with oats.

On 14th February, having taken in the meantime Caravaggio, which had cost Venice so dear, he set out towards Crema, still held by the Milanese. Seeing that it could not be taken in a day, and that camping in that season without shelter was not to be thought of, he destroyed the neighbouring villages, and, collecting the beams and tiles of the huts, built a sort of town for his soldiers. Thus he was able to lay siege to Crema, which was valiantly defended by some eight hundred Milanese foot, who, not content with defence only, strove to spike the engines of the besiegers, which night and day threw balls into the city. At length, after several losses, a breach was made in the walls, and Sigismondo, considering that at any cost the town must now be taken, prepared for the assault. At that moment Francesco and Giacomo Piccinino, who a few days before had quitted the service of Sforza and agreed with the Milanese, appeared with Carlo Gonzaga to succour the city. It was already the middle of April when this happened; and Sigismondo, finding himself at a disadvantage, was forced to retire.

Seeing that Crema had not come into their hands the Venetians, angered with Sforza, turned to the Milanese, and, having found them willing to come to terms, they sent at once to the Count, ordering him to cease to attack them. Sforza, however, was of another mind than this, nor was he to be overcome by imperious advice; therefore he attacked the Milanese more and more furiously, determined that if they would not surrender to him they should die of hunger.

It was now December, and Sigismondo after the retreat from Crema had remained at Fontanella all the summer; but

now he was ordered to move with all his foot to the Valle di S. Martino, and Bartolomeo Colleoni was sent to reinforce him with his brigades. There, owing partly to the bad position which was forced upon him, he was defeated by the Count; at any rate it is certain that the Venetian Provveditori, who were frightened of staking all at a throw, ordered him to return to the other side of the Adda. Sforza then took possession of the mountains near Brevi, and, encamping there on the Adda, fortified the place. But Sigismondo, by what wonderful means I know not, built a bridge, and crossed the river, forcing the enemy to dislodge, and encamping there himself. By this feat he enabled Piccinino to join him with two thousand horse and one thousand foot. But even so Sigismondo was not strong enough to attack the Count, who had encamped not far away, in sight of the Venetian army, in the plain. Time was wasted in skirmishes, so that no relief was sent to Milan, which every day suffered more and more from hunger.

Nor were we in Rimini in better case. For in June the plague had fallen upon us, killing first Bartolomeo de' Malatesta, the Bishop of our city; and when we heard of this many fled to Fano, among them Madonna Margherita d'Este, wife of Beato Galeotto, and Madonna Violante, wife of Signor Domenico, who was visiting us. Yet Madonna Polissena, grieving in her heart for many things, and not least for the quarrel betwixt her lord and her father, would not go. Yet I, thinking no evil, fled with the rest; but scarcely had we come to Fano in safety when straight one news came fast upon another of death and death. And at last, at sunset, came one riding furiously, who told us Madonna Polissena is sick; then I set out, yet I had not gone two leagues along that road when I met him who told me she was dead. Now all this I have set down exactly, because many who hated him have not hesitated to affirm that Sigismondo was guilty

of the murder of his wife. Indeed, he was far away when she died, yet I have heard that he strangled her with his neckerchief, or, as some say, with a towel, with his own hands. Pope Pius II., ready to turn the whole world over if thereby he might lay something to the charge of Sigismondo, has accused him of this crime, as of others of which he was innocent¹; and men have not hesitated to say that the reason why Sigismondo did not attack Sforza on the Adda in December was to be found in this murder, asserting that he feared if he fell into Sforza's hands he would pay for it with his life. Such is the world which, envying a great man his force and genius, ascribes to him every abomination that mediocrity may imagine.

But to return to Milan, which was starving. Truly no way of relief seemed open to them, save at the price of their liberty. They realised this at last, as it seems by the action of three citizens, who (doubtless in Sforza's pay), having killed Leonardo Veniero, the Venetian commissary, harangued the people, pointing out, not unjustly, that since it

¹ There is not, so far as I can find, a tittle of evidence against Sigismondo. Clementini, generally credited with giving a circumstantial account of the murder ("Yriarte Un condottiere de XVme siècle," p. 163), writes as follows: "Alli due Giugno 1449 il secondo giorno della Pentecoste morì Polissena moglie di Sigismondo Pandolfo a figlia del Conte Francesco Sforza d'improvviso, non senza sospetto d'un asciugatoio involto al collo, e però da Pio Secondo fù scritto, che di tre mogli c'hebbe Sigismondo d'una si liberò col repudio, dell'altra col veleno, e della terza col laccio senza occasione alcuna, e concorda Paolo Clerici Veronese frate Carmelitano in una diligente Cronica dicendo che portavano tutte tre le dette Signore immacolata fama di pudiche. . . Scrive il Simonetta, che morta la sudetta Polissena, Sigismondo pigliò un'altra Polissena, ma forse lo dice per ischerzo: poiche egli s'accasò con Isotta degli Atti Riminese già sua Dama." Clementini, *op. cit.* ii. 363.

Again Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 421, says that "they who endeavoured at all cost to injure the fame of Sigismondo, said that her death had been caused by poison administered by him. But I am of the opinion of those who ascribed her death to the plague which raged in our parts, and removed from the world our Bishop Bartolomeo de' Malatesti; while to escape it the wife of the Signor of Cesena, and the widow of Beato Galeotto took refuge in Fano."

was necessary to fall either into the hands of Sforza or into those of Venice, the former was the better, since Venice would only be satisfied when she had reduced them to the condition of vassals, whereas Sforza would for his own sake, as their Lord, maintain their power and protect the Dukedom. When the people, maddened by hunger, and intolerant only of delay, approved these arguments, those three went to seek Sforza, and invited him, in the name of the people, to enter the city. Then that fox came to the gates with all his army laden with food, and, taking with him fifty of his best men, he entered Milan, and was on the following day proclaimed *Signore e Duca di Milano*. This news reached Sigismondo in the mountains of Brianza, where he awaited orders from Venice. Immediately he thought best to cross the river, and destroy his bridges, lest Sforza, to please the Milanese, should seek vengeance on the Venetians; but when he saw that Sforza was content with his Dukedom and the Milanese with their provisions he encamped, as he was bidden, in the territory of Brescia in the first days of April.

The war being thus to all appearance ended, though, as we heard, the Florentines, secretly glad at the success of Sforza, had made alliance with him, repudiating the Venetians, who, for their part, made common cause with King Alfonso; and though this truly seemed to promise another conflict Sigismondo's thoughts began to wander homeward, and as ever when he found time to look about him he thought longingly of Pesaro, for above everything else he desired to possess that city.

Now the Duke Francesco knew this well enough, and, wishing to deprive Venice, if it were possible, of so fine a general, he put it into our Lord's mind to approach Federigo of Urbino on this matter. Sigismondo, reminding himself that they had fought for Florence in the same army, wrote to Federigo, complaining that he had preferred to put Pesaro

into the hands of a stranger, as Alessandro Sforza was, instead of into those of an old neighbour and relative—to wit, himself. He regretted this, he said, and added that Federigo must not think of Alessandro as grateful, for he would convince him easily to the contrary, and for that purpose he now sent him a letter, in which Alessandro proposed war against Urbino; but this letter was but another contrivance of Duke Francesco's.

Federigo on hearing this went to Duke Francesco to complain, but that fox having foreseen the way things would happen, or at any rate seeing now his way clear, bade Federigo agree to help Sigismondo in his plan for seizing Pesaro, but not to do anything when it came to action. All this having been arranged both between Sigismondo and Federigo and that man and Duke Francesco, our Lord, falling into the trap, begged permission of the Venetians to quit their service, and though they tried to dissuade him by the most splendid offers, at last, seeing he was determined, they let him go. Then Sigismondo came to Rimini, and made ready, and at last sent to Federigo to tell him he was about to advance, begging him also to move on Pesaro. But Federigo was at Gubbio, and after delay sent answer that those castles which Sigismondo had taken in the beginning of the war against King Alfonso must first be surrendered to him. But our Lord would not, yet he promised to deliver them when he was in Pesaro. Then Federigo sent an ambassador to warn us that, if those places were not delivered presently, he would advance to defend Pesaro. Suddenly we heard that the Duke Francesco was sending Guido of Assisi to take us in the rear; therefore we sent word to Federigo to come quickly, or, if he stayed, at least to bar the way to these new forces. But we got no answer, and so Broglio went with a few men to see what he could do with Guido; and there the Count of Piagnano was to meet him, but he

came not, sending instead a letter, telling us that Guido had already entered the territory of Urbino, and had been met with every sort of welcome, and that he, Piagnano, had gone to tell Sigismondo of this. Then our Lord thought to take Pesaro alone, hoping for some sign of welcome from within the city; but in vain. Therefore, fearing that Federigo might fall upon him in the rear, he returned to Rimini. Nor will I attempt to describe his rage and fury at the treachery of Urbino, for nothing could appease the longing he felt to possess himself of Pesaro; nor could he forget that city which had so often been within his grasp, but which as now continually escaped him.

XVIII

It was the year of Jubilee. For the moment all Italy enjoyed a universal peace—a lull in the storm of wars that, as it seems to me, were so surely destroying her. Sigismondo was home again after the treason before Pesaro. And in Rimini we rejoiced greatly, for our Court was gay with scholars, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, travellers, and ladies; while the city was like an encampment on the highway to Rome. For there came and went continually monks, friars, parties of cavaliers and mountebanks, travelling musicians, circuses, sooth-sayers, penitents, and pilgrims; to-day a strange company of half-naked Germans would pass by barefoot, with great clubs in their hands, singing their curious songs; to-morrow a pretty, chattering party from Venice, courtesans on their way to the Eternal city to make their fortunes in this world or the next, to pillage a Prince, or to win the Indulgence.

Meanwhile in Rimini our work in S. Francesco went on apace, for neither the thoughts of war nor his long absence from Rimini had distracted Sigismondo from his plans for that Temple.¹ The noble chapel he had built to S. Sigis-

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* vol. ii., page 430, seems to suggest that Sigismondo's first idea was to build merely a chapel in S. Francesco to S. Sigismund. He says: "The example he [Sigismondo] gave of constructing and adorning in our church of the Franciscans a very noble chapel to S. Sigismund having been very soon imitated by Isotta, who likewise undertook to decorate and endow the Cappella degli Angeli, easily made him desirous to renovate the entire interior of the building. With the advantage of having known in Florence the famous Leon Battista Alberti, by the guidance of his art, he amplified the first plans, and caused the erection in the midst of our city of a sumptuous Temple." If this is really the true story of the genesis of the Temple, perhaps it was when the Emperor Sigismund visited Rimini that Sigismondo first determined to build the chapel.



Figure 1. The effect of the concentration of the *Agrobacterium* suspension on the transformation efficiency of *Agrobacterium* strains.



ALINARI

The Tomb of Isotta degli Atti.

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mund in that church was by now almost finished, and already Messer Agostino di Duccio, and Messer Simone Ferucci and others, with Messer Matteo di Pasti, were busy with the church itself. For Sigismondo wished to show the whole world that in Italy, after so many centuries, we had returned from German barbarism to the ancient Roman beauty. And indeed we had worked hard to this end, so that the new Temple might be as nearly finished as possible when the faithful from every country should pass through our city on the way to Rome for the Jubilee.

Now Madonna Isotta, knowing the mind of Sigismondo and the passionate love he had for all beautiful things, and especially his hopes with regard to this Temple, which already in his heart he thought to dedicate to her, at her own cost built therein the chapel of the Angels, nor was any expense spared to make it as fair as possible.

When Sigismondo returned and found their fair new chapel already built, he sent for Messer Bernardo Ciuffagni, and bade him carve a figure of S. Michele, prince of Archangels, in the likeness of Madonna Isotta, and he set this up in the Cappella degli Angeli over the altar; and at the same time he built a beautiful tomb, supported by elephants, and over it he set his shield, with her sign and his, intertwined, as was his wont, and above two elephants' heads, very splendid; and there he wrote *TEMPUS LOQUENDI TEMPUS TACENDI*, and on the tomb itself he carved these words, *DIVAE ISOTTAE ARIMINENSIS, B. M. SACRUM MCCCCL*.

The chapel itself, which Madonna Isotta had built and decorated as I have said, is entered, as are the others in the Temple, under an arch, supported by two pillars, while a balustrade of marble shuts it off from the church. On the pillars Messer Sperandio Bartolomeo has carved many bas-reliefs of *putti*, with musical instruments; for he remembered that Madonna Isotta was a poet, and, moreover, that all the


poets of Italy sang her praises, nor could the Cherubim do less.

Seeing then this lovely and gracious chapel almost finished on his return from the wars, Sigismondo redoubled his efforts to finish the Temple. A great quantity of marble of different kinds was gathered from all parts of Italy, not only to furnish the interior of the Temple, but to proceed with the exterior also, according to the marvellous design of Messer Leon Battista Alberti. Even the sepulchral stones from the old convent were turned to this use. And since the people of Fano had collected a great number of blocks of marble for a new bridge over the Matauro, Sigismondo seized them all for his church, thinking that the bridge could be finished later. Nor was this all, for he had brought from S. Appollinare di Classe in Ravenna, by agreement with the Abate there, very many ancient and most valuable marbles, so many indeed that the people of Ravenna complained to the Doge, Francesco Foscari, saying that Sigismondo had despoiled the church. But the Doge cared nothing for this, and Sigismondo sent to Ravenna to the Abate two hundred gold florins, so that both he and the Commune of Ravenna declared themselves satisfied. Then the Abbey of S. Appollinare passed into the hands of the Cardinal Bishop of Bologna, brother of the Pope, and this man easily gave our Lord leave to take all he desired. So that presently one hundred waggons which we sent one night returned to us laden with pillars of porphyry and serpentine. And indeed since I have written thus much concerning our Temple, I will here set down what I have to say about it, though much that I shall name was not built or carved or painted till later; for the church is not finished to this day, nor like to be now, I fear, in spite of the eager last wishes of Sigismondo.

The church that stood there before we began to build the Temple was, as I have said, a building of the Franciscans

in the German manner—that is to say, it was built of brick, with narrow, pointed windows, through which the sun could scarcely make its way, and those who prayed there prayed, as of old, in darkness. Sigismondo wished to change all this. Some say his first thought was to build only a chapel to St Sigismund; but I speak not of that—I speak of the Temple he vowed in battle to Almighty God. This he desired Messer Leon Battista Alberti to build for him. Now Messer Leon Battista would gladly have raised a new Temple, but, finding S. Francesco a mere shell, he proposed to Sigismondo to turn this dark place into a modern church, in the new manner, with the help of the Romans, as the soul of man was being changed by the same means. The idea pleased Sigismondo, who remembered that already many of his ancestors lay buried there, and when he saw Messer Leon Battista's designs he was even more satisfied. For he beheld veils were on Olympus, a Temple of the Gods, with a dome that soared into heaven, as fair as that of Messer Brunellesco, and then there were pillars and round arches of marble in the manner of the ancients, and all was fair and lovely after their fashion.

But this vision was not to be achieved in a day. It took many years to build the façade, that beautiful gateway modelled after our Arch of Augustus, with two smaller but similar arches on a high platform or plank that ran round the whole church, and between these and on either side great pillars. The same round arches of marble were to surround the Temple, encasing it, as it were, in an outer pierced casket, and under these, tombs were to be placed on the platform, to contain the ashes of those philosophers and poets who gathered round our Lord. For indeed this Temple was, as it were, a monument to Sigismondo and Isotta. If the spirit of Alberti impressed every part, it was the genius of Sigismondo that gave it life; and there again and again around the marble platform, in a frieze of dancing



putti, Messer Matteo da Pasti carved his head as in a medal, and between these medallions others bearing his shield, and others bearing his sign, in the which the S of Sigismondo enfolded the I of Isotta, while there were beautiful and marvellous leaves, flowers, and devices; and often you might find the elephant and often too the rose. It was a Temple built to the Ever-living God, who hides Himself in the beauty of the world, whom men called Zeus, whom we call the Father, who is to be found in the Philosophy of Plato as well as in the Gospel of Jesus, but whom it is, as Pico has lately told, easier to love than to utter in words. And if Sigismondo wrote Madonna Isotta's name under the pediment of this church—DIVAE ISOTTAE SACRUM—he set his own there no less in antique characters very fair to see—SIGISMUNDUS PANDULFUS MALATESTA PAN V. F ANNO GRATIÆ MCCCCL. This Temple raised to the Ever-living God was also to be the monument and symbol of his life. There, within, he himself was to be buried, and Madonna Isotta, whom he had loved; there too lay his ancestors, and many holy men who had been attached to his family; while around them, in those tombs under the arches without, the philosophers, artists, and soldiers of his court were to sleep in death, even as they had wakened in life, for his glory and for witnesses of his dream.

Without therefore the Temple had a certain beautiful and grand simplicity difficult enough to describe; how then shall I fare when I attempt to speak of the interior, that marvellous fair Temple, or palace was it, clothed with many sorts of marble, with pillars of porphyry and stones of serpentine, with innumerable sculptures and statues and frescoes? for the beauty and the richness are beyond my power to tell. Everywhere the great pillars were overlaid with marbles, with bas-reliefs, wrought magically by Messer Agostino with azure and gold. Balustrades of marble divided the chapels of the nave from the church, and on these many laughing *putti*

were to stand, holding shields, playing music, or singing or dancing. And everywhere above and between the arches the marble was wrought into every sort of device—here the acanthus, there a sheaf of corn, here the shield of Sigismondo, there the roses of Isotta, a mask or an antique diadem.

As one came into the church, on the right, built into the wall, Sigismondo had caused his own tomb to be made, after the design of Messer Leon Battista, whom he bade put his own portrait beside that of our Lord, over the tomb. Alas! that tomb which Messer Leon Battista designed was never really built in its completeness, the design being carried out in part only by Messer Bernardo Ciuffagni. On the sarcophagus was graven, in antique letters, this inscription: SUM SIGISMUNDUS MALATESTA E SANGINE GENTIS PANDULFUS GENITOR PATRIA FLAMINIA EST. Later we carved the rest in smaller letters, as he bade us, so that all might see and read the boast that I will not write here.

Of the chapels, and it is here that I feel my feebleness, the first on the right hand is that which our Lord built to his patron, S. Sigismund, King of Burgundy. Over the altar you may see the statue of the king, seated on the elephants of Sigismondo, between two Greek pillars, over which, on the architrave, is a frieze of children's heads and flowers, and above, in the arch, the shield of Sigismondo—all after the design of Messer Leon Battista;¹ while on either side are carved the initials, intertwined, of Sigismondo and Isotta. On the walls you may see great-winged angels holding a canopy, and these were made by Messer Agostino di Duccio; and under the canopy, to the left, a beautiful bronze grille, made by Messer Maso di Bartolomeo,² through which you

¹ Possibly after the design of Alberti, but spoiled certainly in carrying it out by Bernardo Ciuffagni.

² Now destroyed.

may look into the chapel of the relics. The balustrade, consisting of three pillars, on which *putti* stood, with the shield of Sigismondo and Isotta, and a marvellous design of interlaced vases filled with roses, and above, on one side, the rose of Isotta, and on the other the S and I intertwined are from the hand of Messer Leon Battista also. The pillars which divide this chapel—the oldest in the church—from the next, rest on the backs of two elephants in black marble; they are divided into compartments, in which Messer Bernardo Ciuffagni has placed bas-reliefs of the Theological and Cardinal virtues; but all that Messer Bernardo did was fulfilled with the spirit of the past age, and was not worthy to be named beside the other work here.

The chapel next to that of St Sigismund was, as I have said, the Chapel of the Relics. Here at this time there were some few holy things, not worthy of much attention, but later, as I shall relate, we placed there some precious things from Greece. This chapel, which stood between that of S. Sigismund and that of the Angels, which was Madonna Isotta's, was closed by a wall, so that it could not be seen from the church. In this wall Messer Matteo da Pasti, directed by Messer Leon Battista, built a door, one of the loveliest in Italy, as I have thought. On either side, on the doorway, he carved three prophets, and between them medallions and coats, while above, on the lintel, he made, in a medallion, an allegory of *Virtù*, Force, seated on two elephants, breaking a column—thus copying one of the medals he made for Sigismondo. Then, in the triangles formed by the arch, he carved two *putti* astride dolphins, and below, the shield of Sigismondo.

Within, in 1451, Messer Piero di Borgo S. Sepolcro¹ painted Sigismondo kneeling before S. Sigismund of Burgundy; while behind him lie two hounds, and in a little

¹ Piero della Francesca.



1820

From the collection of the
British Museum

London

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ALINARI

Mars.

Mercury.
from the Chapel of St. Gervase.

Venus.

32

medallion without the picture you may see the Rocca, which was so famous. This Messer Piero, by the way, was a strange, indomitable fellow, more interested in mathematics than in philosophy or literature. He spoke much of a new science he had found, which was to revolutionise painting. Later he worked for Federigo of Urbino.

I come now to speak of the chapel dedicated by Madonna Isotta to S. Michele Arcangiolo. The tomb which Sigismondo built there, from the hands of Messer Bernardo Ciuffagni I have described already; but how may I hope to describe eighteen bas-reliefs¹ made by Messer Sperandio Bartolomeo? They show a company of angels—angels or genii, are they?—playing instruments of music, organs, horns, tambours, viols, harps, cymbals, and flutes; some are seated, some dancing; here two sing lustily together, clashing the cymbals; there one shouts in welcome with uplifted hand, proffering the rose. And indeed this joyful company of children is but the herald, as it were, of a whole world of glad immortal creatures, gods and heroes, that Messer Simone Fiorentini and Messer Agostino di Duccio have carved for the pillars of the next chapel, that of S. Girolamo, and for those two on the other side of the nave, the Cappella della Madonna dell' Acqua, and the Cappella del Beato Galeotto. For in the Cappella di S. Girolamo we come upon the very immortal gods that have fled away from the earth, but have never altogether forsaken it, remaining with us still as the stars, the planets, and the moon, beautiful

¹ Yriarte (*op. cit.* page 215) was the first, so far as I know, to name the probable author of these beautiful sculptures, so reminiscent of Luca della Robbia. The artist has written *Spera indeo* on the bas-relief of the angels playing on the organ; and this may well be a play upon his own name. At the same time the verse of Sigismondo was well known to this artist, whoever he may have been, and, seeing that he was at work in the chapel of Isotta, he may have recalled Sigismondo's poem (see below, page 209), and, seeing his success, carved Hope in God.

always as of old. Here is Diana on her high triumphal car, drawn by the beautiful horses of the gods, the crescent moon in her immortal hand; Mercurius, all plumed, holding the snaky caduceus, a viol in his hand, and under his strange Eastern head-dress his gold locks tumble on his shoulders; here Venus Aphrodite comes over the sea, naked and beautiful, drawn by swans in her car of silver, and in her hand is a shell from the foam of Cypris; there Saturn stands, with a sickle in his hand, about to kill his own son; here Mars, on a great scythed chariot, drawn by horses, with uplifted sword threatens the world; while great Jove, the eagle crouched on his serene head, for ever forbears to hurl the ready thunderbolt. Nor is this all, for then come three lesser gods, the Heavenly Twins, Cancer, the Crab; Scorpio and the rest, among them, a great goat, wonderful to behold, and Eolus the wind, in which last you may find the elephant of Sigismondo; and there, since it was in the sign our Lord was born, you may see Rimini carved, most wonderful, with a ship a-sail nearing port, and the waves of the great sea. And if you think this strange company for a church, why I would answer it was Madonna Isotta herself who devised it, whose Temple it was after all. For she remembered the verses of Sigismondo, which years ago had set all Rimini singing in her honour, and which she, thinking ever of his fame, wished to be carved in marble, that those who could not read might understand, and they who could not hear might see. And truly I have kept them till now, as I promised, so that he who chances upon this manuscript may, since may be he cannot see the works, hear the words at least, and be convinced for their sake of the very beauty of the marbles, beggaring description, moving the heart as though they had been dug up in Greece rather than carved here in Italy by those masters I have named.

"Succurime per Dio chio son a mal porto ¹
 Presso al ultimo giorno di mia vita
 Senza sperar di salute conforto
 Si al aiutorio de costo nō me aita
 Che impetei gratia al tuo alto Valor.
 Morte me affresta et la cruel ferita
 Simile aquel ch'al ultimo dolore
 Semp' se vede la morte che aspetta.
 Se recomanda a voi con lieto core
 O Voi che sete d'angelica setta
 Venite in mio favore e removete
 Amor eh nol dime crudel Vendetta.
 O alti Celi: avy sette pianete
 L'uno e Mercurio: et tu Vener bella
 Hor me aiutate se potenza havete.
 O relucente sol piu ch'altra stella
 Giove: e Marte: et ancho tu Saturno
 Pregate quella chel mio cor martella.
 Voi che girate per el Cel dintorno ²

¹ It is again to M. Yriarté (*op. cit.* p. 389) that we owe the discovery of these verses and of others omitted in the collection of Sigismondo Malatesta's verse: "Sonetti riferiti al nome di Sigismondo de' Malatesti da un codice della Riccardiana," collected by Signor Bilancioli, and published in 1860 at Ravenna.

² Literally:

Help me, for God's sake, for I am in evil case
 Near the last day of my life
 Without hope of salvation
 Unless to save me I am helped
 So that from thy high worth I may obtain favour.
 Death grasps me and the cruel wound,
 As one who is in his last agony
 Always sees death watching,
 Whether he appeals to you with joyful heart.
 O ye that are of the angelic band
 Come to my aid and move
 Love! declare no cruel vengeance on me.
 O ye lofty heavens, ye have seven planets
 One is Mercury: and thou fair Venus
 May ye both now help me if ye have power.
 O sun, more resplendent than any other star,
 Jupiter, and Mars, and thou also, O Saturn
 Entreat her who is bruising my heart.
 Ye who march round the heavens

XVIII

It was the year of Jubilee. For the moment all Italy enjoyed a universal peace—a lull in the storm of wars that, as it seems to me, were so surely destroying her. Sigismondo was home again after the treason before Pesaro. And in Rimini we rejoiced greatly, for our Court was gay with scholars, poets, painters, sculptors, architects, travellers, and ladies; while the city was like an encampment on the highway to Rome. For there came and went continually monks, friars, parties of cavaliers and mountebanks, travelling musicians, circuses, sooth-sayers, penitents, and pilgrims; to-day a strange company of half-naked Germans would pass by barefoot, with great clubs in their hands, singing their curious songs; to-morrow a pretty, chattering party from Venice, courtesans on their way to the Eternal city to make their fortunes in this world or the next, to pillage a Prince, or to win the Indulgence.

Meanwhile in Rimini our work in S. Francesco went on apace, for neither the thoughts of war nor his long absence from Rimini had distracted Sigismondo from his plans for that Temple.¹ The noble chapel he had built to S. Sigis-

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* vol. ii., page 430, seems to suggest that Sigismondo's first idea was to build merely a chapel in S. Francesco to S. Sigismund. He says: "The example he [Sigismondo] gave of constructing and adorning in our church of the Franciscans a very noble chapel to S. Sigismund having been very soon imitated by Isotta, who likewise undertook to decorate and endow the Cappella degli Angeli, easily made him desirous to renovate the entire interior of the building. With the advantage of having known in Florence the famous Leon Battista Alberti, by the guidance of his art, he amplified the first plans, and caused the erection in the midst of our city of a sumptuous Temple." If this is really the true story of the genesis of the Temple, perhaps it was when the Emperor Sigismund visited Rimini that Sigismondo first determined to build the chapel.

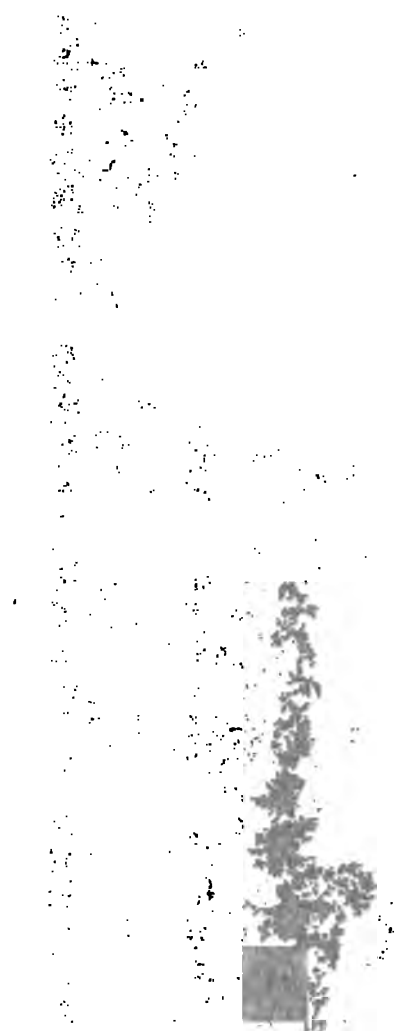




Figure 1. (a) Map of the study area in the northern Adriatic. (b) Detailed map of the study area around the Gargano Peninsula, showing sampling stations 1 through 10 and the location of the Gargano National Park.



The Tomb of Isotta degli Atti.

M76U

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mund in that church was by now almost finished, and already Messer Agostino di Duccio, and Messer Simone Ferucci and others, with Messer Matteo di Pasti, were busy with the church itself. For Sigismondo wished to show the whole world that in Italy, after so many centuries, we had returned from German barbarism to the ancient Roman beauty. And indeed we had worked hard to this end, so that the new Temple might be as nearly finished as possible when the faithful from every country should pass through our city on the way to Rome for the Jubilee.

Now Madonna Isotta, knowing the mind of Sigismondo and the passionate love he had for all beautiful things, and especially his hopes with regard to this Temple, which already in his heart he thought to dedicate to her, at her own cost built therein the chapel of the Angels, nor was any expense spared to make it as fair as possible.

When Sigismondo returned and found their fair new chapel already built, he sent for Messer Bernardo Ciuffagni, and bade him carve a figure of S. Michele, prince of Archangels, in the likeness of Madonna Isotta, and he set this up in the Cappella degli Angeli over the altar; and at the same time he built a beautiful tomb, supported by elephants, and over it he set his shield, with her sign and his, intertwined, as was his wont, and above two elephants' heads, very splendid; and there he wrote *TEMPUS LOQUENDI TEMPUS TACENDI*, and on the tomb itself he carved these words, *DIVAE ISOTTAE ARIMINENSI, B. M. SACRUM MCCCCL.*

The chapel itself, which Madonna Isotta had built and decorated as I have said, is entered, as are the others in the Temple, under an arch, supported by two pillars, while a balustrade of marble shuts it off from the church. On the pillars Messer Sperandio Bartolomeo has carved many bas-reliefs of *putti*, with musical instruments; for he remembered that Madonna Isotta was a poet, and, moreover, that all the

poets of Italy sang her praises, nor could the Cherubim do less.

Seeing then this lovely and gracious chapel almost finished on his return from the wars, Sigismondo redoubled his efforts to finish the Temple. A great quantity of marble of different kinds was gathered from all parts of Italy, not only to furnish the interior of the Temple, but to proceed with the exterior also, according to the marvellous design of Messer Leon Battista Alberti. Even the sepulchral stones from the old convent were turned to this use. And since the people of Fano had collected a great number of blocks of marble for a new bridge over the Matauro, Sigismondo seized them all for his church, thinking that the bridge could be finished later. Nor was this all, for he had brought from S. Appollinare di Classe in Ravenna, by agreement with the Abate there, very many ancient and most valuable marbles, so many indeed that the people of Ravenna complained to the Doge, Francesco Foscari, saying that Sigismondo had despoiled the church. But the Doge cared nothing for this, and Sigismondo sent to Ravenna to the Abate two hundred gold florins, so that both he and the Commune of Ravenna declared themselves satisfied. Then the Abbey of S. Appollinare passed into the hands of the Cardinal Bishop of Bologna, brother of the Pope, and this man easily gave our Lord leave to take all he desired. So that presently one hundred waggons which we sent one night returned to us laden with pillars of porphyry and serpentine. And indeed since I have written thus much concerning our Temple, I will here set down what I have to say about it, though much that I shall name was not built or carved or painted till later; for the church is not finished to this day, nor like to be now, I fear, in spite of the eager last wishes of Sigismondo.

The church that stood there before we began to build the Temple was, as I have said, a building of the Franciscans

in the German manner—that is to say, it was built of brick, with narrow, pointed windows, through which the sun could scarcely make its way, and those who prayed there prayed, as of old, in darkness. Sigismondo wished to change all this. Some say his first thought was to build only a chapel to St Sigismund; but I speak not of that—I speak of the Temple he vowed in battle to Almighty God. This he desired Messer Leon Battista Alberti to build for him. Now Messer Leon Battista would gladly have raised a new Temple, but, finding S. Francesco a mere shell, he proposed to Sigismondo to turn this dark place into a modern church, in the new manner, with the help of the Romans, as the soul of man was being changed by the same means. The idea pleased Sigismondo, who remembered that already many of his ancestors lay buried there, and when he saw Messer Leon Battista's designs he was even more satisfied. For he beheld veils were on Olympus, a Temple of the Gods, with a dome that soared into heaven, as fair as that of Messer Brunellesco, and then there were pillars and round arches of marble in the manner of the ancients, and all was fair and lovely after their fashion.

But this vision was not to be achieved in a day. It took many years to build the façade, that beautiful gateway modelled after our Arch of Augustus, with two smaller but similar arches on a high platform or plank that ran round the whole church, and between these and on either side great pillars. The same round arches of marble were to surround the Temple, encasing it, as it were, in an outer pierced casket, and under these, tombs were to be placed on the platform, to contain the ashes of those philosophers and poets who gathered round our Lord. For indeed this Temple was, as it were, a monument to Sigismondo and Isotta. If the spirit of Alberti impressed every part, it was the genius of Sigismondo that gave it life; and there again and again around the marble platform, in a frieze of dancing

Ippolito d'amor non fece Stima :
 O tu Tristano Aisotta a cui non valse
 Tenere amore nelli bracce Strette
 Che ti fe poi provare amare salse :
 O tu Petrarca che tanti sonetti
 Festi pe Laura tua si bel dire
 Cha ti fu fama a gli amanti dilecti :
 Tutti vi prego p. guelli Martiri
 Che mi provassi el di chiare Amore
 Prima che Morte amor fece apartir
 Ingionochione andate al mio Signore
 Por la Pregate con ingegno et arte
 Chaggia pietà di me suo Servidor
 O langue vuy che sete in dy parte
 Venire a nie voy non Sarete lenti
 Siche Soccorso io habia in ogne parte
 Ancora voi maestri d'instromenti
 In el Cantar voy non Sariti muti
 Siche di farne morir Costei sipenta
 Arpe Sonate Citere e Lauti
 E Pifari e trombetti de Lamagna ¹

¹ O Tristram whom it availed not
 To hold thy love Isotta in thy arms
 For it made thee prove the bitterness of loving :
 O Petrarch who so many sonnets
 Made for Laura, that thy beautiful words
 Won thee fame from delighted lovers :
 O all ye Martyrs, I pray ye
 That I may prove this Love
 Before Death makes Love quit me.
 On your knees go to my Lord
 Then pray with skill and art
 That he may have pity on me his servant.
 O double Tongues
 You will not be slow to come to me
 So that I may have help on every side,
 Also ye masters of instruments,
 Ye too will not be mute
 That she may repent of bringing me to my death.
 Harps, Cymbals, Citters, and Lutes,
 And Flutes and Trumpets. . . .
 So that with your sound of love ye may help me.







ALINARI

Bas. Relief from the Chapel of S. Michael Archangel.

Mr. O

1

Siche Col vostro son damor maiuti
 E poi Vi prego aciascuna Compagna
 Che in ver di me l'amor sia nascosa
 Che di farne morir l'alma si lagna :
 E poi vi prego per Ciascaduna cosa
 Chi po humiliare il suo cor crudo
 Che in ver me sia benigna e gratiosa
 E ne le braza mi racoglia Nudo." ¹

Nor were those sculptures so wonderfully setting forth the verses of Sigismondo all that was carved in that chapel, for there was there besides a most beautiful frieze of *putti* running and bearing garlands, supporting now the shield of Sigismondo, now the enfolded S and I. And truly, who can tell all the wonders of that place?

Opposite this chapel, truly the richest in the whole Temple, is the Cappella di S. Gaudenzio, and on the pillars there Messer Agostino di Duccio has carved eighteen bas-reliefs of the Arts and Sciences, and some of these—to wit, Medicine and Botany—are so lovely that you might think Pheidias himself had made them; and indeed many deceived themselves later, thinking that Sigismondo brought them from Greece. But it is not so; for though he brought back many rare and precious things, these were made in Italy, and by Messer Agostino, in whom at that moment, and in those two pieces I have named, certainly the spirit of the ancients has come to life again. And though all are very fair and lovely, all were not like these two; for as the flowers close on a day of cloud, so do the hearts of men, and especially

¹ And then I beg
 That towards me love may be secret
 So that I may not die.
 And then I beg,
 Whoever can, to soften her hard heart
 That she may be kind and gracious
 And her arms be round about me."

of artists, so that if the sun shine not in their hearts some blossom closes, a certain rare delight, virtue, force, or beauty, I know not well what, passes from their work for that day; and with me too out of the sun too often comes the difficult page.

It was in the next chapel that Sigismondo laid the holy dust of Beato Galeotto, with that of Madonna Ginevra d'Este and Madonna Polissena Sforza, and here too he laid to sleep for ever his two little sons, their children.¹ And it may be that it was the remembrance of them that caused him to bid Messer Simone Fiorentino to carve for the pillars of this chapel eighteen bas-reliefs of children playing, delightful to behold. For in one place they dance around a gushing fountain, laughing at one another, and again they play together in the sea or ride on dolphins, and then they play with the rose of Isotta, and here they hide behind the letters of Sigismondo's name. And here I say again that if you should think it impossible that so many splendid works were accomplished in so short a time, for the first stone of the chapel of S. Sigismund was only laid in 1445, I repeat they were not, but rather through many years, these reliefs, for instance, being finished early in 1458.

The next chapel, like to the chapel of the relics opposite to it (and indeed all the chapels correspond thus as it were, both in their decoration and in a more profound way too, for if he loved Isotta, those whom, as he was assured, he might not love, Ginevra and Polissena lay in the chapel opposite), is closed. Yet are the carvings there fair and lovely: Samson and Saul, David and Joshua, with the escutcheon too, and the portrait of Sigismondo crowned with laurels.

But it is in the next chapel nearest to his own tomb that Sigismondo set the tomb of his ancestors, for indeed he caused all that dust, holier than any relic in his eyes, to be

¹ No longer there, for another's dead have usurped their grave.

collected into one sarcophagus, so that all those of his race who went before him in the lordship of Rimini might lie indissolubly locked together in the grave he had made for them; and this he set in the oldest and holiest part of the church, the Cappella della Madonna dell' Acqua, where an ancient image of the Blessed Virgin Mary has stood for many centuries.

Now the sarcophagus that was made by Messer Agostino di Duccio for the ashes of the ancestors of Sigismondo is of Greek marble, very precious, and certainly one of the wonders of the church. For there Messer Agostino has carved two bas-reliefs, one representing Pallas in her Temple, surrounded by all the race of the Malatesti,¹ and there before all, clad in mail, his sword in his hand, stands our Lord. And everywhere in the Temple, most wonderfully carved with all manner of fair pillars and arches, in every place you may see the name of Isotta, and the initial of Sigismondo enfolded by hers. Nor is the other relief less wonderful, for there you may see the Triumph of our Lord, who rides on a Triumphal car dragged by four horses and decked with captives, under a Roman arch lovely with pillars and crusted with the roses of Isotta and his name and hers; while far away rises a fortress—or a city, is it?—Rocca Contrada, which he took so valiantly, or Urbino itself, which but just escaped him. Then between these two reliefs you may read in antique letters this inscription:

SIGISMVNDVS
PANDVLFVS
MALATESTA
PANDVLFI. F.
INGENTIBVS
MERITIS PROBIT

¹ "Depuis Scipion l'Africain," Yriarte, *op. cit.* p. 224.

ATIS. FORTITV

DINIS. QVE. ILLVS

TRI. GENERIS. SVO

MAIORIBVS PO

STERIS. QVE.

Such was the Temple that Sigismondo raised to the Ever-living God, who in all ages and in different lands giveth life to the world; to the Divine Isotta, whom he loved, and called the Honour of Italy; and to himself, that his glory might be everlasting and his fame remain in the mouths of men.

And if my tale wearies you, for with my poor skill I scarce can hope to bring to your mind a half, or a quarter, of the wonder he made, there in Rimini it stands, an eternal witness to the beauty which is from of old and the genius of the Latin people. Yet indeed I have not told all that is therein, for I grow old, and the light on the hills is dim, and the sun wearies me, in which I have so rejoiced, and the song of the cicala in the olive gardens is for me, as for King Salomone, a burden and a heaviness. Yet though Pope Pius II. has never wearied of speaking evil of our Temple, saying it was fitter for the heathen than for Christians, I too, remembering the words of my friend Pico, those consoling, serious, hopeful words, will think in my heart that, even as Messer Leon Battista taught me there are no more any barbarians in the world; so there are not, and never were heathen neither. That the gods are beautiful and very far off, immortal, while we must die, I, who daily watch autumn fall for the last time, know full well; yet in the grave may be I shall feel the coming of Persephone, and hear the footsteps of Aphrodite on the sea; for I too in my fashion have loved these also as well as Jesucristo and His Mother. Come now

let us agree together, is it not easier to love the Gods than by any thought to utter them?

And for the Temple of Sigismondo, if it need excuse, it stands; question it, and its beauty shall soften your heart, and your thoughts concerning men will be less hard, so beautiful it is.

XIX

Now among that various and never-ending crowd who passed through Rimini on the way to the eternal City in the year of the Jubilee there came a certain Ultramontane lady, who in beauty could not well be matched in our city, for all her parts were so well formed and in just measure proportioned, that together they made a woman singularly beautiful, so that one might say of her: *Che dal capo al piede perfetta beltà la ricoprìsse*. To speak but of her hair: she wore it long, so that it fell over her neck, her breasts, and shoulders, sometimes hiding and sometimes discovering them, shading the unique loveliness of her face, and when the breeze tossed it it fell a rain of gold over her loveliness, as in the tale of Danæ in old time; and whether this were artifice or carelessness I know not, for carelessness is often artifice in woman. Yet, as I know, this northern lady was no less modest, and chaste than princely, graceful, and supremely fair.

Attracted by the fame of our Temple, she stayed, on her way to the eternal city, some days in Rimini, accompanied by the ladies and gentlemen of her court. And one morning early, being in the Temple, Sigismondo, who happened to be there, to the evil of both (as I fear), saw her, and was at once so smitten by love that he wished to change her lodging for a greater; but she would not, and not long after departed on her way.


Then Sigismondo, wandering in his mind, thinking only of her delectable loveliness, said within himself: "How can my body live without a soul, or my soul without its corporeal

covering?" And with extreme impatience he looked for her return.

In the meantime, as I have said, we laboured at the Temple, which daily grew more beautiful. Then suddenly we heard that the plague, which after the seige had broken out in Milan, had been carried to Rome by the pilgrims; and later news came that the Pope himself had left the city, and was on his way to Fabriano, and Sigismondo, when he heard it, began to make ready to go there to greet him.

In the midst of these preparations one brought news to Sigismondo that that fair Ultramontane, on her way Northward, would enter our city before nightfall. Therefore Sigismondo, going out with a company to meet her, found her at the gate, and besought her not to go, as she had done before, to the Inn, but to accept a better lodging from him; but she refused him with many thanks. And again and again he besought her, but as many times as he asked she refused, foreseeing her danger.

Some days went by, and I, busy with Messer Agostino, and with preparations for the journey to Fabriano, thought indeed that that unfortunate lady was departed. Alas! as I found, it was not so. For Sigismondo's love was turned to hate and fury. Then one night, because of the heat and the never-ending song of the grasshoppers, or may be for some heaviness of heart, I know not why, I could not sleep, and hearing voices as though in altercation I went out into the more private parts of the Rocca. Presently as I wandered searching for those voices, my sword in my hand, for it was dark, I heard cries; then, running towards them, I beat upon the door of the room whence they came, demanding entrance. Suddenly the door was opened, and one rushed past me into the darkness. Then I, entering swiftly, beheld that most fair lady on the ground, her hair all stained with blood, while over her lay Sigismondo,



kissing her dead beauty, with strange cries, and little breaths like the hissing of a snake. Then indeed I crept away, for I was afraid; and, going into the court, I found a hideous figure crouching out of the moonlight, continually wiping his hands as well as he could. Going towards him I seized him by the neck, thinking him to be the murderer. How can I tell my wonder and surprise when I found it was indeed a murderer, but one who lived for that purpose—I mean the executioner of the city.

Seeing my astonishment his mouth widened into a hideous smile, and he said: "Messere, you may well be astonished at the doings of this night, for they have dragged tears even from me, abandoned poor wretch though I am."

"What mean you?" said I, still with my drawn sword, ready to send him to his account; for he looked dreadful enough, covered with blood as he was, nor did he cease that horrid wiping of his great hands.

"Come aside into the shadow that I may tell you," said he, "for the guard will be here in a minute, and it is not well that this night's work get abroad." So we went into the shadow, he before, I behind him.

"Look you, our Lord is mad with Love," said he, "but the Lady, Messere, she with the gold hair, loved him not. Well, well, women are all fools, and life is naught, and virtue an old tale.

"Now, Messere, Love, mark you, is easily turned to fury if it be denied, and lust, they say, is but the sunshiny side of hate. I know not, I; but that our Lord loved her—you might see it in his little eyes, that know so well to catch the enemy, and, as they say, never blink at the sun. Well, she denied him not once, not twice, but many times. To-night he lost patience. I have seen him so in Tuscany: Sforza knows that look, and Federigo of Urbino, and neither cares to face it.

"Well, I make a long tale you think? To the point then. She denied him; therefore to-night he went with a company to beseech her to admit him. Lord, she was fine enough for a king; but she would not. Then, in a rage, he bade them drag her here, and when some of the lady's suite offered resistance, we knew how to send them running. Then they bore her, Sigismondo did, in his great arms, into the Rocca, and besought her with boundless and flattering promises (Lord, to hear him promise! Lies of lovers!); but she gave him not a look, much less a word, and would do nothing but weep. Then promises turned to threats, and he fell upon her, knowing well some women must be taken by force and love to be violated; yet she never moved, but stood firm as a rock, and at last she spat upon him.

"Then, like a dog, he fell upon her, and set his teeth in her white arm, so that the blood ran like scarlet threads over her whiteness, dripping from her finger-tips; and I in my corner, even I, poor wretch that I am, wept to see it. But he, with the heart of a viper, tore the clothes from her till she stood there naked. Then, seeing she would not, he bade me cut her throat. Look you, Messere, by the Madonna of the Waters, I did not want to die. Soul of a cat! I cared not for the job. Yet what would you? You know his eyes; like gimlets, they pierced my soul; and, well—to be short with you, I—he drew his sword, and threatened my life—look you, my life! Well, I did it—click—and she was as dead as Piccinino. Then he fell upon her; but I, fearing more for my own life, hearing someone knock, opened the door, and ran, while you went in."

I thrust the swine from me, and went to my own room.¹

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¹ This frightful crime, with which Pius II. charged Sigismondo—no crime real or imagined escaped the eyes of that worldly wiseman, that

Sometimes he seems to me like that Duke d'Urslingen who bore on his shield the legend: "Ennemi de Dieu de Piété et de Miséricorde."

Is it that, having already made himself famous by his valour, he wishes to make Italy ring with his crimes, so that he may distinguish himself not only by his virtue, but by his infamy also?

Did he murder Ginevra d'Este? Was it by his hand that Polissena Sforza died? Ah! how shall I ever know? He is corrupt, a splendid nature, powerful, and full of force, divided against itself; in him a barbarian fights with a god, and is often victorious.

Yes, in our time, so full of corruption, it is a malady of powerful and splendid natures that we see—spirits that, in a land less unfortunate in its government, might have conferred a new sort of immortality on the Fatherland; only here there is no Fatherland. Just that, with all its profound sentiment, we have not been able to steal from the ancients or to find in our envious cities. . . . And sometimes this corruption assumes a colossal shape, and crime seems to acquire almost a personal existence of its own; while each individual man, even among the lowest of the people, feels himself emancipated from the control of the state, whose title is illegitimate and is founded upon violence, and no man any longer believes in justice or in law. For the men of our time have no conscience, no sense of evil as evil; a thing is useful or not, beautiful or ugly, strong or weak, never good or bad. We walk in the paths of wickedness with the same serenity as in

reformed rake, where he who had betrayed Siena was concerned has been the subject of much controversy. Some say it happened in Lombardy, some in the Veronese; Clementini, *op. cit.* p. 379, gives the same account practically as Sanseverino has given above. Battaglini, *op. cit.* vol. ii. p. 427, absolutely denies it, saying that the murderer could not be found, and proving that Nicolas V. at least did not think Sigismondo was the guilty person.

the path of righteousness, plucking the flowers by the way-side, or talking of virtue.

All our Art is serene, our Literature is incapable of Tragedy, our type of womanhood is the courtesan, our type of manhood the successful bandit. We are not aware of the swine in us, that prick-eared devil who lurks behind the noblest lives of those who are, as it were, evil unaware.

It is not that I wish to make excuse for Sigismondo; he is but the type of his age; for if all have not expressed themselves as he has, all have thought to do what he has done in their hearts. No excuse is possible for ever. Yet in this darkness, where even the steadfast light of Plato must grow dim and fail, I have wished to understand. . . .

It was August when Sigismondo, in the midst of a brilliant company, taking me also with him, set out for Fabriano to greet the Pope. For Nicholas V., lover of Letters and Art as he was, full too of curiosity as to our Temple, held Sigismondo dear, as well for his encouragement of learning as for the services he had rendered to the Holy See. Therefore when we came to Fabriano we found the principal persons of his Court come out to meet us; while we learned that lodgings had been provided for us, together with torches, calves, sheep, sweetmeats, and oats in abundance. For while as far back as June 1448 Sigismondo had been confirmed by Pope Nicholas in his Lordship of Cervia, and in May of the present year in Bertinoro, the Pievanato di Sestino, Meldola, and other places, now a new favour awaited us; for Sigismondo, with Domenico, who presently joined us, was not only declared Vicar in common with Domenico in Rimini, Cesena, Fano, Bertinoro, Cervia, S. Leo, and S. Agata, Sestino, and Penna Billi, but Sigismondo himself in particular was confirmed in the Vicariate of Sinigaglia, Castello di

Tomba, Pergola, and Gradara, and other places; while the free and lawful enjoyment of all other lands and castles at that time possessed by him, though not mentioned in the concession, was granted him and his heirs. For the annual payment, which had been set down at six thousand gold florins, a large sum was agreed upon; but since Sigismondo, through Messer Carlo Valturi, his chancellor, had already paid during this year some fifteen thousand florins to the Camera, the Pope remitted the rest of the debt, adding that he did this for remembrance of the great services our Lord had rendered the Holy See; and for the future he reduced the annual payment to four thousand florins.

All these honours would have come to nothing, for Galeotto Roberto, the son of Ginevra d'Este, was dead, as was the son of Polissena Sforza, so that Sigismondo had no legitimate child living, but that the Pope, knowing this well enough, for the great love he bore our Lord, bethought him to remedy the defect in the birth both of Roberto, Sigismondo's son by Donna Vanella dei Toschi, and of Salustio, his son by Madonna Isotta, thus permitting them to succeed to the Lordship.

It was September when Sigismondo returned to Rimini with these honours. A few days later he set out for Fano, to prepare his troops against the war that seemed once more about to burst upon Italy, for since Sforza had won the Dukedom of Milan a new contest seemed inevitable. The Florentines, led by Cosimo de' Medici, delighted with the success of him they had always favoured secretly, had at last openly allied themselves with the new Duke, thus breaking the alliance with Venice. The Venetians, on the other hand, angry at the treachery of Florence, and enraged at the success of Sforza, joined with King Alfonso to combat the Duke and the Florentines. And indeed they only awaited a favourable opportunity for their hate to pass into war. Yet this expres-

sion of their enmities was kept in check chiefly by the expectation everywhere in Italy of the advent of Frederic, king of the Romans, who was to be crowned Emperor at Rome.

All that winter in Rimini we laboured on the Temple, and when summer brought no war we continued to devote ourselves to it; yet, Urbino proving troublesome, Sigismondo led out his troops, yet rather for exercise than for fighting, and indeed the quarrel came to little enough: a few skirmishes in the hills, a few encounters in the valleys, here a castle lost, there a castle taken, but no war worthy of the name. For truly all were waiting, not without anxiety, to see what King Alfonso and the Republic would do together; it was no time for private quarrels. Only always we laboured on the Temple, and perhaps the most pleasant remembrance I have of that year is the advent of Messer Piero di Borgo, who came to paint Sigismondo's portrait in the Chapel of the Relics. Something strange, impersonal, almost hard, you may find in that dry and faintly-coloured fresco, that is yet full of force and life; but indeed what seems so impersonal is in truth one of the most personal things in the world, Messer Piero being indeed as baffling as one of his pictures, full of a reticent force and curiosity about things not unpleasing, and full too of theories of the future of painting that interested me much; yet he stayed but long enough to paint that one picture.

And at last, on the first day of the New Year, 1452, Federigo entered Italy, and, avoiding Milan, passed into Venetian territory. Then a few days later Sigismondo and Novello set out to greet him, joining the Signori of Faenza, Coreggio, and Palavicini, and other gentlemen in the company of Marchese Borso d'Este. When they returned, having paid homage to Federigo, whom they had met on the Adige towards Verona, preparations were made for the departure of Sigismondo for Rome, where, at the Pope's request, he

was to be present at the Coronation and marriage of the Emperor. For Federigo had come to Rome not only to be crowned, but also to marry a niece of King Alfonso—Leonora, of the royal house of Portugal.

It was the last day of February when we set out, making but slow progress, for the season was wintry, and the roads bad. And on 6th March, still a day's journey from the eternal City, we fell in with a gay procession of soldiers and countrymen, which proved to be the rearguard of the Emperor, whose carnival cavalcade was the talk of all Italy. Riding on in haste, we joined the suite of the Emperor later, and rode all the day with him. Now, while Sigismondo amused himself eagerly enough with the gentlemen he found there, talking of the war that only the advent of the Emperor held in leash, I, riding alone, was presently accosted by the Bishop of Siena, Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini, a much-travelled prelate who, though he suffered badly from the gout, seemed to delight in every hill and valley and running stream we passed. Nor was I able to forget his enthusiasm, which was a delight to see. We talked much too concerning Byzantium, the fall of which before the Turk the Bishop thought could not be avoided, and while he deplored this with passionate earnestness, yet he said he saw not how it could now be prevented. "Serious matters," said he, "are settled by arms, not by law or justice." And I gathered that he laid the fault and disgrace of that danger chiefly at the door of our country, which, distracted by internal quarrels, was unable to enforce its will by arms. Then I, hearing him speak much concerning the old religion and the new learning, asked him his opinion concerning the hidden truth of Paganism, forgetting, in my enthusiasm for his knowledge, that he was a churchman. But he forgot it not. Hearing my question, even in his excitement he turned to me with a smile, and said: "Messere, Christianity, even if it were not approved by



Relief sculpture of a female figure, possibly a deity or personification, standing between two columns. She is wearing a long, flowing robe and has her right hand raised towards her face. The background is decorated with a floral or foliate motif.

THE SUNDAY OF LAFATISTA

On the Sunday of Lafatista, the day of the feast of the Epiphany, the King of Rome, already in the city, received the King of Castile from Portugal.

It was in February when, with some darkness, the season was winter, and the frost did not still a day's journey from the city. On that day processions of soldiers and monks, in the rearward of the Emperor, began the talk of all Italy. King Alfonso was on the side of the Emperor's army, and now, while Sigismund amused himself with the gentlemen he found there, only the advent of the Emperor held the city. I was presently accosted by the Bishop of Palermo, a much-travelled prelate, who, though afflicted from the gout, seemed to have the force of a rushing and running stream, which could not smother his enthusiasm, which was not less excited by lack of sleep concerning Byzantium, than by the presence of the Turk. The Bishop thought could not be satisfied, and while he deplored this with passionate grief, he yet tried to say, not how it could now be prevented, but "serious matters," said he, "are settled by arms, and not by reason or justice." And I gathered that he laid the blame of the great evil, not so much chiefly at the door of our Emperor, as of the Sultan. In our quarrels, was unable to say much of the Emperor, when I, hearing him speak much of the Sultan, and the new burning, asked him his opinion of the truth of Paganism, forgetting, in my ignorance of his knowledge, that he was a Christian. But he told me not. Hearing my question, and in his excitement he turned to me with a smile, and said, "Messers, Christianity, even if it were not approved by



ALISARI

Bas Reliefs from the Chapel of S. Gaudenzio.

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miracles, ought to be received for its own worth. He who knows much is much persecuted by doubt. The nature of God can be better understood by believing than by disputing; just as a cultivated man will submit his own house to his city, his city to his country, his country to the world, so we should be ready to submit the world to God."

Just then we came up with the company of the Emperor, who was riding under a rich baldacchino, and a minute later we heard one of the bodyguard cry out: "Ecco! Roma!" So we came in sight of Rome. All halted to pay reverence to the eternal City, and Aeneas Sylvius, alighting from his horse, began to speak to the Emperor, pointing out the distant towers of Rome and the ruins of the Campagna. For a long time Federigo listened in silence, then, dreamily looking at the Bishop of Siena, who had spoken very eloquently, he said: "Let us go forward, for I seem to see you Cardinal and future Pope."

Ah, had I but known then how disastrous that prophecy would prove for us!

That night, though the Cardinals and nobles came to meet him, the Emperor spent outside the walls, but we entered the city, and came to our lodging. Going on the next day to S. Pietro, we saw the splendid procession pass into the Piazza, and the Emperor kneel and kiss the Pope's foot, while, after, the Pope kissed him on the cheek. Of the Coronation which followed, on the 19th March, which was the anniversary of the Pope's own Coronation, I shall write nothing. All men know the splendour of that ceremony, and how that Federigo was crowned not only with the crown of the Emperor, but, since he had not entered Milan, on 16th March, with the iron crown of Lombardy also, which had been brought from Sforza's city; and the same day was his wedding day, for the Pope himself married him to Leonora of Portugal, and, since he was not yet

Emperor on that day, many of the Cardinals took precedence of him, for as yet he was but a German king. Yet that too was a thing to wonder at, I think, and serves to show how low the Empire had fallen in the minds of men.

On the 19th March, as I have said, Federigo was crowned Emperor, swearing first obedience to the Pope. He had brought from Nürnberg the imperial insignia of Charlemagne; but, as the Bishop of Siena told me later, the sword was in reality that of Charles IV., for he had seen upon it the Lion of Bohemia. Yet all men thought it was indeed the sword of the great Charles, and revered it therefore. Thus is our worship of antiquity often brought to naught—a dream lacking reality, a vision of our hearts.

XX

THE Emperor was departed; summer was come. On the very day that Federigo crossed the Alps the Venetians declared war on Sforza. Soon their armies, with those of the Duke of Savoy and the Marchese di Monferrato, were attacking the states of Milan. Nor was it long before King Alfonso's troops, eight thousand foot, began to enter Tuscany, under the command of Federigo of Urbino,¹ who, angry that Sforza had already arranged for Sigismondo to lead the Florentine army, in common with Alessandro of Pesaro, had joined the king. With him too went the king's young son, Ferdinando, to give encouragement to the army.

Ferdinand at first attacked Cortona, but seeing it was not like to yield, and considering the natural difficulty of the place, set, as it is, on a hill well-nigh impregnable, having ravaged the country, he encamped not far from Arezzo, but, fearing lest he should there find no provisions, he determined to seize Fojano, where he knew the Sieneſe would not let him want. He did not find the taking of Fojano so easy a matter as he had hoped, however, for not only were the people of that place very brave, and fertile in plans for defence, but on the very day he encamped there Simonetto di Castel di Piero, in the Florentine service, arrived at Arezzo, and was joined almost immediately by Astorge Manfredi. Yet their troops were not sufficient to attack the Aragonese, though they made some attempt on their supplies towards Montepulciano, but were utterly defeated, so that, even

¹ Federigo was apparently ill during the greater part of this campaign.

under the walls of Arezzo, they would not have been safe if Sigismondo, with the greater part of the army of Florence, thirteen thousand strong, had not arrived at that moment.

Our Lord, already disgusted at seeing his command halved with Alessandro Sforza, was content to let the enemy weary themselves in attempting to take various small places, and although he gave out that he was anxious to assist Fojano, he did nothing to save that place, which surrendered to Aragon, though on honourable terms. But Sigismondo led his army to Monte Imperiale, and fortified the place, content with observing the enemy and keeping the army of Florence intact.

In this he was wise, for presently Federigo turned his attention to Castellina, not more than twenty-five miles from Florence; and though he received help from the neighbouring castles, he could not take the place without cannon. Sigismondo meantime continually harassed him, and it was long before the gun arrived from Castiglione. When it came it burst at the first shot, and it was necessary to send again for another. By this, winter was come, and Federigo had to abandon the siege, going into quarters in Maremma, between Talamone and Grosseto. And the Florentines, seeing themselves, as they thought, free from danger, sent their troops into winter quarters, Sigismondo returning to Rimini.

But Federigo was not yet done. With eight galleys and eight hundred men he seized the port of Vada. This seemed serious to the Florentines, who saw that, though they had saved the centre of their dominions, the enemy at Fojano and Vada held the flanks, and were thus in a good position to renew the war in the spring.

In their consternation at this turn of affairs they first sent ambassadors to Sforza, and agreed with him to call René of Anjou into Italy, and to provide him with money to attack Aragon in the Kingdom. Then they sent Bernardo

de' Medici to Sigismondo, confirming him in the command of their troops, offering him new and better terms;¹ for they feared, knowing our Lord's love for Venice, that, having already received a part of the pay, not yet due, he would allow himself to be persuaded to join that Republic.

When spring came Sigismondo went to Tuscany, determined to retake Fojano, Ferdinando by then being at Castiglione.

Nevertheless, though the Aragonese were at a disadvantage, since the Sienese, more eager than before to remain neutral in spite of the efforts of the King, divided their army, there was some disorder among the Florentines owing to the rivalry of Alessandro Sforza and our Lord, who still divided the command. For Sigismondo in particular considered himself insulted, since he was not in supreme command. And indeed this rivalry almost came to blows, so that Sigismondo, thinking he might one day, and that not distant, have to chastise Alessandro, sent for Gaspare Broglio, who had loved him so well in the past as to go near losing his honour for his Lord. Now Sigismondo thought to send Broglio to Siena to negotiate with that city to appoint him, if need were, their Condottiere. Broglio at once consented to do this, for he was well known in Siena; yet he did not hesitate to point out to Sigismondo that he must act carefully, so as not to put his whole power in peril in a single

¹ The terms of Sigismondo's new engagement were, according to Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 439, as follows:—Florence within fourteen days was to pay Sigismondo fifteen thousand florins at four lire per florin, and afterwards for every month of service three thousand five hundred florins of current value. He, on his part, with at least fourteen hundred horse and four hundred foot, was to pass into Tuscany within a month after the first payment, and there to act on the advice of the Ten Signori or their commissioners. If they decided that instead of going into Tuscany he should carry the war into Urbino territory, he was to receive so much, that the fifteen thousand florins already paid him should be equivalent to fifteen thousand di camera, and after every month four thousand florins. Moreover, his territory was safeguarded by a guarantee from Florence and Sforza.

day; that it would be very dangerous to quarrel openly with Alessandro and to leave the Florentine army, for those generals now favourable to him would become adverse through fear of Florence; and that while to enter the Sienese territory under a safe conduct would be easy, to remain there or to quit it to return to Rimini would be very dangerous, with Ferdinando and Federigo of Urbino, his deadly enemies, on either side of him. Even if he should succeed in returning, how was he to keep his army, with every power in Italy opposed to him? for even the Pope, who favoured him, would not then give him employment for fear of offending the rest.

Now while Sigismondo saw these dangers and commended the sincerity of Broglio he, nevertheless, continued to urge him to go, the which at last he was persuaded to do. It is from this time I trace the beginning of all the evil that overwhelmed him, and us with him, in the end.

Meantime the troops of the King were rendered almost useless by a malady caught in Maremma, so that they could scarcely leave their quarters. The people of Fojano, hearing this, one day seized their arms, and secretly admitting a company of the besiegers, gave their city and the Aragonese garrison into the hands of the Florentines. When he heard of this good fortune Sigismondo prepared to take the army to Vada, which by this time had been strongly fortified, and a new wall built, with lime and stones brought by sea. First, however, he raised and burnt Fojano, that it might not fall again into the hands of the enemy. The Florentine army was divided into two parts, one of which, as I have said, was commanded by Sigismondo, and the other by Alessandro Sforza; and thus they marched towards Vada by different ways. But the Florentines, knowing of the sickness that had fallen on the armies of the King, feeling themselves relieved from pressing anxiety, and weary of the continued quarrels

of their two generals, decided to dismiss one of them to Lombardy; so they sent Sforza to help his brother, and re-appointed Sigismondo Captain-General of their forces.

It was opposite Vada, on 30th September, that Gianozzo Manetti and Bernardo de' Medici, the Commissioners of the Republic, gave Sigismondo, with the usual solemnities, the staff of chief command before the assembled army, Messer Gianozzo Manetti praising him very eloquently to the soldiers in an oration. And Sigismondo, for answer, swore to take Vada.

This was indeed so difficult at that season that no one save Sigismondo, who was daring, impetuous, and full of resource, would have thought of attempting it. All the country round about was a marsh, so that it was almost impossible to use *bombarde*. Moreover, not only was the place magnificently fortified, but King Alfonso had sent his best troops, the pick of his army, to defend it, under Count Carlo da Campobasso, one of his most experienced captains. Now, while the ground was a marsh, that was not the only difficulty, for the form of the country is such that, if all were dry land, it would still be well-nigh impossible to strike the castle with effect.

Nevertheless, all these difficulties Sigismondo overcame by his genius; yet new ones constantly arose, and not least among them the reinforcements which the besieged constantly received from the sea. Even this, however, by a new placing of the *bombarde*, he overcame, and so well that the galleys could not approach the port.

Campobasso now saw that further resistance was useless unless Ferdinando could come to his assistance, but that army was in such a condition from sickness that but few were fit to march, much less fight. At last, when every hope of relief was gone, Campobasso secretly removed his men by night, thus abandoning the castle, which came into

the hands of Sigismondo; then, winter coming on, he returned to Rimini.

Certainly Sigismondo had won great honour in that campaign. Yet I for one could not rejoice, for while these internal wars had distracted us from more important affairs, Byzantium had fallen into the hands of the Turks. Ah! how shall we ever excuse ourselves for that fall? Are we not disgraced for ever before all thoughtful and cultivated men that shall come after us, in that we have allowed the treasure-house of the ancients to fall into the hands of Asiatics and barbarians? What is Sforza's Dukedom or the crown of Naples beside so great a booty, yet we, quarrelling for a lordship, have allowed the fountain of civilisation, the very garden of learning, to be destroyed.


Was it this news that turned the thoughts of Venice, Milan, and Florence towards peace? Ah! no. Venice feared lest she might lose more gold than she cared to think upon; Sforza feared that, winning a Dukedom, he might be left penniless; Florence feared that she would beggar herself. Only Nicholas V. thought not of money, but concerned partly for his own honour, partly for the honour of the Church, sought to pacify Italy that he might turn and chastise the infidel.

Therefore, secretly, for fear of the King, who, persuaded of his own strength, wished to continue the war, Venice made peace with Sforza—the peace of Lodi, which was published in April 1454.

Now when the King heard of it he was both angry and disgusted with Venice, who certainly was a traitor to him, for one of the articles of the peace stipulated that the Florentines should cease to make war on the armies of Alfonso, and that the Siennese should no longer allow Aragon to maintain himself in Tuscany. King Alfonso found himself therefore obliged to withdraw from the territory of Siena with all the troops he had left.

Yet while this great peace gradually came to include all the greater powers in Italy, a new little war broke out between the Sienese and the Signore of Pitigliano, Count Aldobrando Orsini. The Sienese had encamped against Sorano, one of the castles of the Count, who, aided by Everso dell' Anguillara, assailed the camp of the Sienese, whose commissioner, Antonio di Checcorosso, whether in the pay of the enemy or from stupidity, I know not, always did the opposite of that which his condottieri had decided upon, so that in the end the army of the Commune was completely routed. It was then decided to create a new army to retrieve the fortunes of the city, and to command this many wished to elect Federigo of Urbino.

Now Messer Gaspare Broglio, being in Siena, heard of this, and knowing Sigismondo would not care, any more than he did, to see Urbino preferred before him, made such efforts, and so moved the principal citizens by praise of Sigismondo, that he was charged at last to see whether our Lord would accept the post of Captain-General of their army. Meanwhile the Balii sent to the Pope, wishing for his good will, and telling him that they proposed to continue the war against Orsini and Anguillara, asked whether he would approve of their choice of the Signore of Rimini as their General. Now Orsini and Anguillari were rebels against the Holy See, and no lord of Italy was more dear to the Pope than Sigismondo. Among them all there was certainly none who for generosity of heart, frankness, natural eloquence, learning, knowledge of literature, generosity and kindness to scholars, choice taste, and love of the arts, pleased him better. For just as these qualities distinguished Sigismondo from many other Lords, so they had won him the love of the Pope. Therefore he replied to the Sienese that not only did he approve their choice, but that he himself had intended appointing Sigismondo to chastise those rebellious Lords. Moreover, the



Sienese knew well that not many months before King Alfonso had proposed to make Sigismondo his Captain-General, and though partly owing to the peace, partly to our Lord's claims, this had come to nothing, his son Roberto was espoused to the daughter of the Duke of Calabria. Therefore the Signori della Balià, seeing that all were pleased with their choice, concluded the agreement with Sigismondo.

Only Florence and Sforza looked on enviously, the one hoping for the destruction of the Sienese, the other fearing for his brother Buoso Sforza, who held Santa Fiora and other lands near Siena. Sforza even went so far as to accuse Sigismondo of every sort of treachery before the Signori, but without avail. Would indeed that he had prevailed for all our dealings with Siena brought us nothing but trouble later. However, in October Sigismondo moved with his troops from Rimini, going towards Siena, and at the beginning of November was honourably presented to their army as Captain-General, having under him Carlo Gonzaga, Pier Brunoro, Giulio da Varano, Ghiberto da Correggio, Leonello Corso, and others, who with Broglio were in the Sienese service at the time. Then, having reviewed the troops at Ponte Arrigo, he marched towards Sorano; before long, the *bombarde* having been brought from Siena, he was pressing and hammering it on all sides. But the place was naturally so strong and well garrisoned that it could not be taken, either by his *bombarde* or by assault, however frequently he tried. Moreover, winter came on early, with an extraordinary severity, making the siege more difficult still; for it rained continually; then came snow and frost; there was no hay for the horses, and the troops were ill sheltered, so that not a few died from the cold.

Now Sigismondo would certainly have been content to go into quarters, considering the season, if he had not been, in the first place, concerned for his honour, and, in the second,

disturbed by the lies that he found Checcorosso was sending to the Sienese, reporting that it was Sigismondo's fault that the place was not taken, and accusing him of having entered into an agreement with Count Everso. When they heard this the Signori sent for Broglio, who had persuaded them to accept Sigismondo, saying that all that Sforza had said of him was true, that he seemed to be conducting the war rather for the pleasure of the enemy than for victory. Nevertheless, as they said, they wished to convince Sigismondo of their good faith and the honour in which they held him, and therefore they asked Broglio what mark of honour would best convince our Lord of their sincerity. Broglio told them that what they had heard was not true, but the fabrications of a personal enemy, that he knew Sigismondo was doing what he could, that the season was severe and wintry, and that if they wished to show their gratitude to his Lord he thought a proper present was a charger, with the Banner of the Commune and the Staff.

This answer pleased the Signori, and having purchased a noble horse, and laid upon it a rich cloth of gold, they sent it with the Banner and Staff to be presented to Sigismondo by Goro Lolli, who was the nephew of the Bishop Eneo Sylvio Piccolomini. And he received it, but gave in return thanks, and nothing more. Truly for this strange thoughtlessness or meanness, if it were so, foreign enough to his nature, he paid heavily later.

Broglio also had gone with the Sienese to the camp, and now besought Sigismondo to break off all relations with Count Everso, and to put away all thought of using him against Aldobrandino. But Sigismondo urged that he had only come to an agreement with him to prevent him helping that Signore; and indeed our Lord redoubled his efforts to take Sorano. Yet in vain, for winter became more terrible every day, and the condottieri and constables of the army

complained that they were losing all their troops; for, as they declared, it was manifest Sorano could not be taken at that season, and they ought to go to quarters.

Now Sigismondo by this time began to agree with his captains, for he had ever much regard for the well-being of his soldiers; therefore he thought to write to the Signori of Siena on the matter, but not without consulting Checcorosso. This man, besides being stupid, hated Sigismondo, who, he thought (may be rightly), laughed at him. Therefore he himself wrote to the Signori, saying that the only obstacle to victory was the General, and if he were removed, and the command given to Ghiberto da Coreggio, all would be well. Then the Signori sent two commissioners to report on the conduct of Sigismondo, providing them with twelve thousand ducats, which if he were found to be loyal they were to give him that he might divide them as seemed best to him among the captains.

These two commissioners having seen the state of affairs reported the truth to the Signori, adding that only the hatred of Checcorosso and Coreggio made them write as they did. Nevertheless, they brought back the money, which angered the Signori so much that they thought to discharge them; for it seemed to them that that money might well have persuaded Sigismondo and his captains not to quit the field before they had taken Sorano. Nevertheless, some few in Siena still suspected Sigismondo, for they were aware of his correspondence with Count Everso, though they knew not his explanation of it.

Now Sigismondo on his side, knowing nothing of the twelve thousand ducats, began to be impatient of what he took to be the ineradicable suspicion of the Sienese. Therefore, calling his captains together, he bade any speak who could show him a way of taking Sorano. But, instead of answering him, all begged leave to return to their houses. Sigismondo,

understanding well the request thus made him, and agreeing with it in his heart, urged them to wait at least till he had written to the Signori and received a reply. And they agreed. In the meantime he ordered the *bombarde* to be fired day and night against the castle, but in vain. Wishing, however, to end the campaign with some honour to himself and satisfaction for the Sienese, he persuaded the Count Aldobrandino to submit his cause to his decision; and he consented, and sent his son to Sigismondo as a hostage. But Sigismondo kept all this a secret, wishing first to write once more to the Signori, and win permission to raise the siege.

Then he received letters from Nicolò Panzuto degli Adimari, his secretary, at that time in Siena; and Broglio also had warning from his friends that their departure would be prevented. His fears were increased when the Commissioners ordered Broglio to Pian Castagnaio; therefore, thinking that some snare was being prepared for him, he decided to depart without any more delay.

Escape however, for it had come to that, was no easy business. Taking with him Aldobrandino's son, and abandoning the artillery, he marched with his troops, ragged, starving, half dead with cold and exposure, to Monte Merano. Before departing he had written to the Signori that the season no longer permitted him to remain; that if they wished to retain him in their service they must give him winter quarters; that as he had endeavoured, even to the end, to win them victory, so he had obtained from Count Aldobrandino his son, as a guarantee of the agreement which through him the Count was willing to enter into with Siena.

Here under Monte Merano he awaited their reply, which was by no means satisfactory to him, for it said that, ill satisfied with the expenses they had already incurred, they no longer wished for his services, but gave him his discharge; as for the accord with the Count, they would

maintain it since it had been promised in their name, but they had good reason to suspect it.

When he received this reply Sigismondo thought only of returning to Rimini. How to do it? Everywhere there was danger. Checcorosso, anxious to get him into his hands, had persuaded Bonifazio, his friend, to ask him to a dinner in his Castle Ottieri; this he refused, for he knew if he had accepted he would have been made a prisoner. Not content with this, Checcorosso had published an order that no one throughout the state should provide him with lodging or provisions. All the Captains save Carlo Gonzaga and Giulio Varano had departed. Sigismondo was alone with his weary and sick men. Gonzaga had been given winter quarters at Orbetello; him Sigismondo besought for shelter. Receiving a courteous reply he went thither, but on his arrival he was refused entry.

He was now forced once more to enter the territory of Siena, to go to Grossetto, where lay Coreggio, his enemy. Moreover, if he wished to go farther his only way lay over the Chiane under Monte Pescara, by a small bridge; if that were destroyed he was a prisoner, and escape impossible, for even Varano had left him to go home. But fortune was with him, for she ever favours the bold. Suddenly he came to a country full of cattle, and these fed his men. Then wandering one night with his troops under Monte Pescara, at dawn he found the bridge safe, and crossed the Chiane, abandoning his horses and baggage,¹ for a heavy rain was falling. At last he came to the territory of Scarlino, which belonged to the Lord of Piombino, who remembering old services, and being afraid of the Florentines, received him, and refreshed both him and his men. Then when he had asked for leave to march through Florentine territory and obtained it, he came at last back to Rimini.

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 462. It was in this baggage that doubtless the Siense discovered Isotta's letter to him, printed in Yriarte, *op. cit.* p. 396.

XXI

How to explain the forebodings of disaster that come to me so mysteriously in the midst of good fortune? Have the stars really power in our hearts, so that we become aware of our fate sometimes between sunrise and sunset on a summer's day, even in the fairest and most serene weather, when there is no sound in all the world but the endless song of the cicala? Then surely, if ever, we should be at peace, and yet our hearts are suddenly restless, and we know not why.

It was such a restless foreboding that had possessed me all through the previous summer, nor when Sigismondo accepted the command offered by Siena was my melancholy lightened. I expected disaster; alas! I was not wrong. For even though he had been successful there were other things which assured us of trouble—the old quarrel with Aragon, for instance, the real personal grievance he had against Sigismondo in that affair of the Tuscan war, when our Lord, having received part of the payment promised, went over to the Florentines without returning the money he had received from Aragon.

It is true that when King Alfonso first heard of that secret peace signed at Lodi between Sforza and Venice he had offered a pardon to Sigismondo, and employment too, and even an alliance; but in those days our Lord's terms had been too high, so that no agreement had been come to. Yet indeed, as Sigismondo was now to see, it would have been altogether to his advantage to make that treaty.

For King Alfonso, seeing the Venetians, as well as the Florentines and the Duke of Milan, intent on peace, allowed

himself to be persuaded by the exhortations of the Pope to join with them in the pacification of Italy. Yet from the league then established two powers only were excluded by the hatred of the King, and these were Genoa and Sigismondo Malatesta, Signore of Rimini.

Certainly the Pope when he agreed thus to exclude Sigismondo, whom he loved, expected that when the greater wars were disposed of the smaller quarrels too would gradually disappear; and therefore in the treaty it was declared that formal inquiry should be made as to whether or in what degree Sigismondo was the king's debtor, and, proved indeed to be defaulter, when the debt were paid he should enjoy all the privileges of the peace, which if his debt were not proven he should share at once. If this were the Pope's thought certainly it was not King Alfonso's. He was intent upon revenge, for he thought he had been played with in the affair of Tuscany.

Now about this time Giacomo Piccinino, discharged by the Venetians, still smarting with jealousy of his rival, Sforza, without even the possession of the smallest castle or the means of maintaining the numerous Bracceschi troops, sighing to build up a state at all costs, turned lightly to anyone who flattered him with hopes, wandering about Italy, first around Bologna, which, remembering that Nicolò Piccinino had once held it, he tried to stir up to revolt. Then in Romagna, where Novello, at this time unfriendly to Sigismondo, gave him hospitality, King Alfonso suggested to him that he should prey upon our dominion. Nor was he slow to take the hint, for he had with him some four thousand five hundred horse and foot. Sigismondo, having done everything for his own defence, sent for help both to the Pope and to Sforza, proving to them that King Alfonso was again ready to turn Italy upside down to satisfy his own hunger and ambition. The Duke, rather, as we thought, for hatred of

Piccinino than for love of Sigismondo, sent some three thousand horse into Romagna to assist us; while the Pope excommunicated Piccinino as a turbulent invader of the States of the Church, besides forbidding anyone to grant him assistance of any kind. Piccinino then left Romagna, and proceeded against the Sienese, whom Alfonso hated scarcely less than he hated us. This again proved a misfortune for Sigismondo, for the Sienese thought they suffered that we might go free.

But worse still was to befall us, for in those days Pope Nicholas died, and after a few days was succeeded by Calixtus III., Alfonso Borgia of Valencia, who owed much to the King, for he had come into Italy as one of his counsellors, and by his influence had won first the purple and then, as some say, the tiara. Eneo Sylvio, Bishop of Siena, was in Rome at this time, and used all his influence to help his city, even going to Naples to persuade the King, with whom he was friendly, to call Piccinino southward. And at length Alfonso agreed to do so, sending Giacomo to Abruzzo with the command of eighteen hundred men.

Now the new Pope was more eager than Nicholas, if it were possible, to send a crusade against the Turks, and he hoped that, seeing Italy was nearly pacified, Alfonso would send his fleet to support the Papal ships under Cardinal Scarampo; but he was disappointed. For Alfonso, instead of sending his ships eastward, made war on Genoa. Sigismondo, seeing this, and knowing that Aragon thought of nothing but his own aggrandisement, feared that if Piccinino were again sent against him under the King's banners he would look in vain for help, both from the Pope, who feared Alfonso, and from the Duke of Milan, whose daughter was espoused to the son of Ferdinando. Truly Sigismondo saw in that marriage one more barrier removed between him and the King's vengeance. Nor were the Lords of Urbino and

Pesaro likely to remain idle, for they each hoped, if he were destroyed, to inherit his dominion. And indeed Duke Federigo at this time traversed Italy to stir up hatred against our Lord, who, remembering his strength and the prosperity of old days, instead of securing himself by a wise marriage, followed his heart, and married Madonna Isotta degli Atti, for she had long besought him to make her his wife.¹

How may I explain this seeming madness in him, this strange indifference to danger, to the danger that always threatened him in the hatred of Aragon, the envy of Federigo of Urbino? No, I cannot explain this marriage, unless I assure myself that love in him conquered ambition, so that he would rather pleasure Madonna than secure his dominion. Certainly we rejoiced in Rimini, for but few after all were aware of our danger; but even during the festivities of his marriage it was necessary to take some precautions against the tireless hate of Urbino, so that we sent Count Antonio di Monte Sapigno, Podestà of Fano, and Nicolò Panciuto degli Adimari, to Duke Borso d'Este, to offer him Madonna Lucrezia² in marriage for his brother Alberto. Nor were we disappointed, for the House of Este was our friend, and the contract was signed on 26th February. For this cause, if for no other, Duke Borso did his utmost to befriend us. Knowing the hatred of Urbino, he wrote to Federigo, who was in Milan, begging him to call upon him in Ferrara on his return. And in the meantime Sigismondo, with some counsellors, taking me with him, went to Ferrara; but, as Fortune ordered it, on the day after Federigo's arrival, when we should have been composing our differences, Sigismondo was somewhat ill, so that the Duke brought Federigo to our apartments. Sigismondo advanced, with the help of a stick,

¹ See letter from Isotta to Sigismondo before Sorano (quoted in Yriarte, *op. cit.* p. 396).

² Lucrezia was Sigismondo's daughter by Isotta.

it is true, as far as the door, limping to receive them; yet there was no sign of friendship between him and Urbino, but only of enmity. The Duke, seeing Sigismondo in such a plight, dissembled, ordering the table to be laid, and then proposed that on the following day we should go to his villa, di Belriguardo, hoping that there some sort of understanding might be arrived at. So we went to Belriguardo, Federigo bringing with him Messer Antonio da Pesaro, gentleman-in-waiting to the King; Michele, a Chancellor of the Signor of Pesaro; and Benedetto de' Barzi, his friend, who was studying in the University of Ferrara, all our enemies, together with Messer Antonio Paltroni, his first secretary; while Sigismondo took with him two Venetian gentlemen—Giovanni da Mantova, one of his secretaries, and Anastagi, his principal secretary and counsellor. But, in spite of the Duke's good offices, the meeting was altogether unfortunate, for Federigo and our Lord began to remind one another of their injuries, and from this came near to blows, each apologising to the Duke, who did his best to bring peace between them; but Sigismondo would hear nothing of compromise, so that at last, seeing that all delay was useless, the negotiations were broken off—on the next day Federigo departing, as we found, not for Urbino, but for the Kingdom. And before long we heard that he had told the King he was ready to attack us, while at the same time he held out to Giacomo Piccinino the hope of founding a dominion on our ruin.

Yet once again, though we were full of anxiety, Duke Borso and Francesco Sforza stood between us and danger, the one from love of Sigismondo, the other from fear that Giacomo Piccinino might annoy his brother, Alessandro of Pesaro. Then it was proposed that we should pay a certain fixed sum to the King, who thereupon should receive us into his favour. But Sigismondo would not, for he asserted that,

according to the articles of the League, it had first to be decided whether he was debtor to the King. Ah! why was he so obstinate, when even the Pope and Cardinal Eneo Sylvio Piccolomini endeavoured to persuade him? But in truth he refused to believe that the King would ever attack him; and to make more sure, knowing that now for some time the King had been in love with a noble maiden of Naples, Madonna Lucrezia di Gerlola d'Alagna, who, as youth allowed her with a grey-haired lover, was certain of obtaining all she asked, Sigismondo sent her, by Roberto his son, a most precious and fine ruby, asking at the same time for a niece of hers in marriage for Roberto. Then, thinking himself safe, knowing, or thinking he knew, the good will of Florence, Sforza, and Duke Borso, in the autumn he discharged the greater part of his troops. Scarcely had he done this when he heard that Federigo and Piccinino were advancing from the Kingdom upon us.¹ All that Duke

¹ The following letter from Federigo of Urbino to the Signori of Siena is interesting, and was written at this time :—

MIGHTY AND POTENT LORDS, AND FATHERS HONOURABLE AND BELOVED,— I have immediate need of a master mortar-founder, and being informed that there is in Siena one such able and sufficiently qualified, who would well satisfy me, and whom I knew when detained there ill [this was in 1453], I urgently pray your Lordships as a particular favour to give him leave of absence. And my need of him being urgent, I trust that he will come quickly along with the bearer hereof, and I shall pay him his dues that he shall be well satisfied. I have reason to hope that your Lordships will oblige me as to this artist, for in all that tends to the weal of your Republic I would be most affectionate and observant beyond any other ally you have in the world. As for the mortars, I want to use them against the Lord Sigismondo, the enemy of your Lordships, to whom I commend myself.

From URBINO, the 7th of November 1457.

Again :

MIGHTY AND POTENT LORDS, DEAREST FATHERS, — I have not cared to write sooner to your Lordships, nothing further having been decided by the serene King regarding peace or war with the Lord Sigismondo ; but I have at length determined to write this, in order that your Lordships may not marvel at my silence and that you may be informed how matters

Borso could do, and he did much, even sending ambassadors to Piccinino (who would have heard them but for Federigo), was of no avail, and by November we were face to face with two enemies. Yet we stood not alone, for Novello, quite reconciled with Sigismondo now, sent for Piccinino, who loved him, and told him that as he was childless he had determined to leave his dominions to him, Piccinino, and for this cause he hoped he would refrain from making war on his brother. This so took Piccinino that from that day he gave Federigo rather hindrance than support. Then winter came in earnest, and gave us time to think. And, thinking, there came into Sigis-

stand. And I hereby advise you how the Lord Sigismondo has sent many humble and respectful messages, through his son, to the serene king, supplicating that his Majesty would condescend to have mercy, and, notwithstanding misconduct so gross as to merit no favour nor compassion, that his Majesty would take to himself his sons as his Majesty's slaves, and would deign to decide that they should not go begging their bread. And his son besought his Majesty to permit that his father should come and throw himself at his feet, with a halter round his neck, publicly to crave mercy, bringing with him as much money as possible and the jewels formerly offered; and, should this not suffice, that his Majesty might take whatever else of his he would, until satisfied. His serene Majesty replied that the youth should remain at Naples whilst he went to Magione, and that he would cause our answer to be sent through his council. Thus passed many days without further incident. And although the ambassador of the Duke of Modena strongly interceded, no further reply was obtained, nor any other resolution come to, things remaining in suspense. And I am informed that the Serene King is decided to exact the sum demanded of twenty-seven thousand ducats of the highest value and seventy thousand for expenses; besides insisting on restitution of my territory without restoring his own conquests. But the Lord Sigismondo's people declare it impossible for him to give such a sum in cash, though he might pay twenty thousand down with the jewels, and as far as sixty thousand by instalments, so that I do not see how the matter can well be arranged. I, however, hourly look for further advices, and your Lordships will be informed of what I hear, for things cannot now remain much longer in suspense, Gottefredo being gone to Naples with the Lord Sigismondo's ultimatum.

FEDERIGO, *Count of Montefeltro
Urbino and Durante Captain-General
of the Serene King of Aragon.*

From URBINO, 2nd May 1458.

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mondo's mind a remembrance of what the Florentines had done when, hard pressed by the King, Tuscany had been invaded: how to distract Aragon, they had determined to invite René of Anjou into Italy to reawaken trouble in the dominions of Alfonso. Therefore, without wasting a moment, Sigismondo sent Messer Ranieri de' Maschio to propose this to the Doge of Genoa, who was in like case with himself, and at the same time he sent the condottiere Colella da Napoli and Fosco, a Neapolitan gentleman, exiles under the House of Aragon, to King René d'Anjou and to Duke Jean, his son. By these it was quickly arranged that Duke Jean, with the flower of the troops of France, should come into Italy against Alfonso.

The Doge of Genoa, Campofregoso, agreed to give the Castelletto of Genoa, and all the fortresses of the Republic, into the hands of King René; while Duke Jean would be appointed governor, with an annual allowance of one hundred thousand scudi. A natural daughter of the King was promised in marriage to the Doge, and a dowry, both in money, and in lands about Marseilles, would be given her. Furthermore, if they acquired the Kingdom the Doge would be given some considerable Lordship within it, while his brother also would receive a like reward. Both were to serve under Duke Jean; and Sigismondo was to support the enterprise in every possible way, giving over in the meantime Monte Fiore, with its stronghold, and other places, as a pledge. All this was arranged that winter, while Sigismondo gathered about him every soldier he could, so that when spring came he had in his service very many Captains with their companies.¹ Scarcely, however, had the first skirmishes begun (in which, as it happened, Antonello da Forlì and Marco de' Pii, in command of some of our companies,

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 472, gives a list of them.

were routed) when news reached us that King Alfonso, while hunting in Puglia, had caught a fever, and was dead. Thus once more we were delivered out of the mouth of the lion, for the war in Romagna came to a standstill.

It was necessary to decide whether or not we should renew it. First, Sigismondo sent Broglio to the Kingdom to see what could be done, whether the Prince of Taranto would support the House of Anjou or the House of Aragon; but Broglio found so many plots in the Kingdom, the Pope being anxious to exalt his nephews, while Sforza wished to abide by the settlement of Pope Nicholas, that nothing could be decided, and indeed he had scarcely returned to us when news came of the Pope's death; for he was an old man, and feeble, and all his hopes were disappointed, and especially that of the crusade against the Turks.

All our fortunes now seemed to rest on the future Pope. If a man friendly to us and to our plans were elected, one who would honour us as Nicholas had done, all would be well; but if not? Already we were so deeply committed in the Angevin affair that retreat was impossible.

Those days of the Conclave I shall never forget. First, we heard that Estouteville had been elected, and that was none so bad, for he would have favoured certainly the French claims to the Kingdom; but at last, though indeed we would not believe it, news came that the Cardinal of Siena was Pope, Eneo Sylvio Piccolomini—a Siennese, and therefore our enemy; the uncle of Goro Lolli, whom Sigismondo had treated so scurvily before Siena, and therefore our enemy; the dear friend of Alfonso who had ever favoured him, and therefore our deadly foe. The Cardinal of Siena was Pope. Then I remembered the words of Federigo the Emperor: "I seem to see you Cardinal and future Pope." If we had known the tragedy that awaited us in that day's election! Ah! why did we not remember that a Siennese cannot forget

an injury, that what is once done can never be undone? Truly in my heart I reminded myself of that Condottiere who had won countless victories for the city of Siena, so that when the Commune thought to reward him they could find no honour great enough to bestow upon him. Then a citizen rose up, and said: "Since we must bestow upon him only the greatest honour, for that alone is worthy of him and of us, come, let us kill him, and worship him as our Saint." If such were their hatred of those who had served them well, what remained then for those who had failed them, deserted them, as they thought, betrayed them?

Yes, indeed Fortune had served us the worst trick of all. Eneo Piccolomini was Pope, and remembering Æneas, he had taken the name of Pius II.

XXII

It was a moment full of danger for the peace of Italy. In the interval between the death of Callixtus III. and the election of Pius II. Ferdinando, determined to force the new Pope, whoever he might be, to acknowledge him as King of Naples, had allowed Piccinino to quit Romagna and to approach Rome, seizing Assisi, Nocera, and Gualdo. While this movement of Piccinino's benefited us, though he forced us to buy back our strongholds—for the time at least we were rid of him, yet we foresaw that he would soon be dislodged from the cities he had seized from the Holy See, for Pius II. was already friendly to Ferdinando, and presently sent to crown him—Broglio urged Sigismondo to send Piccinino money to encourage him to continue to annoy the Pope; but nothing was done, for Sigismondo preferred to trust altogether to the coming of the Angevins, whom we had called into Italy, and to the rising of the Neapolitan Barons, which had already begun.

Now it happened that a certain Stefano, a secretary of Prince Jean's had already set out to meet the Prince of Taranto, and Sigismondo, hearing of it (and indeed it was at his request that Stefano had been sent), despatched Broglio again to the Kingdom, under pretext of buying salt. After encountering many storms, which drove him to the coast of Schiavonia, Broglio at length came to Taranto at about the same time as the secretary Stefano, whom, fortunately, he was able to identify. The Prince was at first still averse from dealing with the Angevins, but Broglio pointed out to him that, since among so many Barons he alone had not been

present at Ferdinando's coronation, he would be foolish to remain without support. So he persuaded him to join the league.

Thus affairs in Italy appeared to be moving not altogether to our disadvantage. So Sigismondo, having no war at home, save the continual war with Urbino, which, I think, never ceased, seized about this time, in revenge for his losses, the Castles of Secchiano and Uffigliano, taking them by storm, and burning them. He had also obtained by surrender Sarcorbaro, Castellaccia, and Carpagna, when the news we had expected daily reached us at last—to wit, that Piccinino compelled by Ferdinando to evacuate the cities he had seized in the Dukedom of Spoleto, was returned to join Federigo, so we abandoned Carpagna, and returned to Macereta. Then followed a series of skirmishes, in which we lost Tavoletto and the Castel di Maiolo, and we should have suffered more hurt still, but that winter came on and put an end to fighting. Indeed, our case was bad enough, for we had three implacable enemies, Ferdinando of Naples, Federigo of Urbino, and the Pope, strong enough to band all Italy together against us. It was from the last of these, in many ways the most powerful, that, if at all, we might hope to come to terms. For if Nicholas V. and Callixtus III. had been eager to bring peace to Italy in order to make war against the Turks, Pius II., a man of deep knowledge, devoted to the old learning, was altogether possessed by this idea. To this end he left Rome in January, and though the season was severe, set out for Mantua, whither he had called a conference to establish that universal peace he so desired in Christendom.

Our position was one of extreme difficulty, because our dangers had led us into intrigues of every sort, so that we feared the success of one lest it should expose us to the results that would follow the failure of another. We had committed ourselves almost beyond recall to the Angevin

cause; at the same time, fearing lest that might fail, we had entered into negotiations with Ferdinando. We had urged Piccinino to make war on the Pope, already our enemy, yet now we must be prepared to submit ourselves to his arbitration. Only with Urbino we had not dallied, but had even been his enemy, as he was ours. On turning all this over in his mind, Sigismondo determined to go to Milan to recommend himself to Sforza, and to show him that from him alone we expected salvation. Nor had we altogether neglected to recommend ourselves to the Pope, for putting ourselves in the hand of Messer Francesco Filelfo, a most illustrious and famous scholar, very eloquent and learned, we, remembering he had been the Pope's master, contrived that he should plead our cause. Messer Francesco was full of encouragement, and praised us warmly for our wisdom in appealing to the Duke of Milan. Nevertheless, because we were weak, and, like the sick man of whom Dante speaks:

*Che non può trovar posa in sulle piume
Ma con dar volta suo dolore scherma,*

we could not be content, fearing that Sforza would not hesitate to sacrifice us in some compromise if he saw fit; therefore we kept alive the negotiations against Ferdinando, Broglio going again to Taranto for this purpose.

Meantime we heard that the Pope's journey northward from Rome was like a triumphal progress. Carried in a litter (for the crowds pressed too much upon him if he were on horseback) he passed through Assisi to Perugia, staying there some thirty days; thence he made his way to Corsignano, his birthplace, whose name he changed to Pienza, establishing there a bishopric; and after three days passed to Siena, where he stayed till spring was come. About this time we had ill news from the kingdom, for we heard, and all Italy with us, that the Prince of Taranto was reconciled

with the King, and on this account Prince Jean delayed his enterprise. Then came Broglio, saying that this was merely a ruse to deceive Ferdinando, that the Prince of Taranto was with us, and continued the King's enemy; thus we were bewildered, and knew not what to do or to believe.

Then news reached us that the Pope had left Siena, and was come to Florence, where he was received joyfully, though Cosimo de' Medici kept his bed, saying he was sick. And at last we heard that Pius had set out for Mantua, going by way of Bologna, which city, as we expected, received him reluctantly. Then Sigismondo, waiting no longer, set out for Ferrara, that he might there greet the Pope as he passed, coming by water from Bologna. All the time he was there he did his utmost to win the regard of Pius, paying him court tirelessly and accompanying him at last to Mantua. Indeed, Sigismondo was almost alone among the lords of Italy who came to meet the Pope in that city; and even he was recalled, much to the Pope's disgust, by the tireless and cunning hate of Federigo. For Piccinino began to attack us again, urged on by Federigo, who, not to meet the Pope, feigned sickness, and kept his bed. Nevertheless, before we could reply, for we were taken by surprise, Piccinino had taken from us fifty-seven castles in all, and had assaulted Fano, though unsuccessfully. In the meantime, in Mantua, in what hands was our cause! The Duke of Milan hated us, though secretly, scarcely less than Federigo of Urbino, and was indeed partly won over by the Count, who was negotiating for a marriage within the Duke's family. As for the Pope, who in this affair between the vassals of the Church had great authority in the conference, while prudence made him side with Ferdinando, had he not been our enemy ever since Sigismondo betrayed (as they said) his city of Siena? Nor was he far from thinking that, more than once, we had, to save ourselves, urged Piccinino to attack that

city. Goro Lolli too, the Pope's nephew, had much influence in that Court, and he loved us not, thinking himself injured in receiving only thanks for the Courser and the Banner and Staff he had brought Sigismondo as gifts from the Sienese. These were our judges! And so it happened that when publicly in the congress there was a discussion as to the justice of the war waged against us by the King, the opinions expressed were as various as the disputants — the only universal expression of opinion being one of disgust that Florence and Venice, in whose service our lord had spent his life, and in whose defence he had so often courted death, should have abandoned him to the fury of a foreign king, a barbarian, and a tyrant, who was moved merely by avarice to injure and destroy him.

At last Sigismondo could bear it no longer; he determined to go to Mantua to defend himself. So he set out, and coming there, seeing no better way, placed all his affairs in the hands of the Duke of Milan for settlement.

He could not have done anything more fatal to his cause. Sforza hated him for many reasons, and not least because he had called the Angevins into Italy. But Sigismondo, almost at his wits' end, remembered nothing, nor did he recall how Sforza himself had suffered when he had placed his affairs in the hands of his father-in-law. Such a man was Francesco Sforza that even his enemies, no less than his allies, trusted him.

Such was the state of our affairs when Broglio brought us news that Prince Jean was about to land in the Kingdom, that already victory was at hand. What to do! Already we were committed to too many causes, nor were we any longer trusted anywhere. Yet Sigismondo tried to withdraw the powers he had given to Sforza to settle his affairs, but indeed it was too late; already the verdict was given against us; there only remained the sentence. It was as follows:—



As debtor to the King, Sigismondo must pay within a fixed term the sum owing, or lose Sinigaglia and its contado and the Vicariate of Mondavio. Meanwhile these cities were to be held by the Pope. All the territory that had been won in the past from Urbino must be restored, and the expenses of the late war paid by Sigismondo, or La Pergola, Macerata, S. Agata, and other places must be given up to him. In the meantime Federigo was to hold them.¹

It was a bad peace, as Broglio said.² Fortune, which had given the Papacy to a Sienese, made us fear for our dominion.

Sigismondo in his heart was at bay. Ah! I shall not forget his face when he learned that verdict; truly it is not such men as he that will obey anything, but force; a priest's word, even the Pope's was not strong enough to break his courage. Tirelessly he prepared for defence, by arms, by intrigue, by bribery, by any means whatever that might serve to promise us the victory.

¹ There is much confusion here, no two writers give the same terms. Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 492.

² Sigismondo attended in person at Mantua to plead his cause. (*Cf.* Dennistoun's "Memoirs of the Dukes of Urbino," Vol. I. p. 110.) Federigo, however, only sent an envoy. When the verdict was made known to him Sigismondo apparently at first refused to be bound by it. But the Pope checked him, saying: "Hold your peace; our care is not for you: but for your House; our pity belongs to your subjects, not yourself, whose manner of life merits no commiseration. However you may defend it by a multitude of words, your whole life tells against you, and your sole plea is upon the deeds of an ancestry deserving well of the Church. Hence is it that we seek to pacify your foes; and if you now resist what is fair and equitable, we shall leave you in the slough wherein we found you; nor would it surprise us were the divine mercy to permit the poor to be afflicted for a season that you may fully expiate your guilt by a bloody end, or by a wretched and impoverished exile."

It seems, however, that Federigo no less than Sigismondo was obstinate, and would make no concession, for the Pope wrote to him as follows:—

To Federigo, Count of Montefeltro, etc.

Beloved son, we salute you. It is our urgent desire, in accordance with the charge committed to us, that harmony should be restored between the dissentient faithful; and to this we are the more urgently bound when mis-

First, it seemed good to Sigismondo to try to arrange terms with Ferdinando, therefore he offered him his son Roberto, with five hundred *Lancia*, to make war against the Angevins. This, however, came to the knowledge of Piccino who was angry, for all his care was to prolong the war in the Kingdom that he might gain something; therefore, since he cared not to stand on the losing side, he too offered his sword to Ferdinando.

Then was confusion worse confounded, for Sforza inter-understandings arise between our own friends and the subjects of the Holy Roman Church. Seeing therefore that quarrels have for some time past prevailed under our vicars between you and our beloved son, the noble Messer Sigismondo Pandolfo Malatesta of Rimini, occasioning bloodshed, fire-raising, rapine, and the like calamities, and that worse evils impend, unless we timely avert them, we have thought fit especially to intimate to you our pleasure that a friendly adjustment should take place rather than arbitrarily to employ our supreme authority to that end. Twice have we partly discussed this matter at Florence, and now again at Mantua, and in this good and pious work we have had the aid of the noble and ever-beloved son, Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan. We entertained the hope of bringing the affair to a happy conclusion, and of ensuring you an honourable and lasting peace, in which your credit and advantage should be equally regarded; nor shall this hope be fallacious if you will at all accede to our mediation. But since you demand very rigid conditions, giving your ambassadors no discretion as to modifying them, limiting us merely to ministerial interference, it is impossible for us to bring about a compromise; for rather than thus accept a compulsory dictation, Sigismondo is ready to try the chance of war, and expose himself to all impending risks. It is with equal grief and astonishment that we perceive another great explosion ready to burst forth. You despise the pacification we offer you, sure, enduring, advantageous, honourable though it be. You are victorious, and Sigismondo acknowledges you to be so; as worsted he is ready to submit to terms, and if you consent to our arbitration the matter is settled. Better surely to accept a certain and favourable proposal than to hazard a doubtful hope. You are the conqueror; let not your rigour and obstinacy wrest from you your conquest. Often have we read and observed how unstable are the events of war, how rapid and various its reverses, how constantly in the end an over-confident victor is vanquished. We therefore exhort your Highness in the Lord to weigh well this matter, and if you deem an honourable peace advantageous to your affairs, to leave open for our mediation somewhat of the terms you have dictated to your envoy, in which case we repeat our assurance that you will best consult your own reputation and advantage. Given at Mantua 21st June in our first year [1459]. See "Pii II. Commentaria," pp. 52, 74.

ferred, dissuading us from mixing in that quarrel; and again Sigismondo followed his advice, and Roberto remained in Romagna.

Piccinino, however, was anxious to return to the Kingdom, for though he cared not whom he fought, he hoped to gain more there than in Romagna, therefore he offered to return to Sigismondo all his strongholds if he would give him a free and safe passage through the Riminese. Sigismondo consented to do this; and after a marvellous march, in which he escaped the Papal troops only by a hair'sbreadth, Piccinino came into the Kingdom, where, seeing that the Angevin cause seemed the likeliest, he deserted Ferdinando, joining Prince René. Nor was he wrong, for presently we heard that Ferdinando in a series of battles—and one was fought by torchlight—though aided by the troops of Alessandro, Sforza, and Federigo of Urbino, had been utterly defeated, so that he feared even to lose the capital; and indeed he would have been altogether crushed, but that Piccinino, wishing to prolong the war refrained from pressing him when he was in his power.

Now Sigismondo had sworn at Mantua not to engage in war for ten years; but seeing the Papal troops defeated and the Angevins victorious, knowing too that he was already in disgrace with the Pope, both on account of his aid to Piccinino and for the interference of Roberto, his son, in the quarrel of Jesi and Ancona,¹ urged thereto by Piccinino, who proposed to make war on the Pope in his own territory, Sigismondo seized Mondavio, and began to besiege Sinigaglia. And truly all might have gone well if Piccinino had advanced instead of

¹ It seems (according to Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 500) that the people of Jesi had ravaged the lands of the people of Ancona. The latter, who had collected an army for revenge, offered the command to Sigismondo. He did not go himself, but sent his son to help them. However, the Pope favoured Jesi, and hired Ludovico de' Malvezzi of Bologna with eight hundred horse and two hundred foot. Roberto defeated him.


wasting his time in plundering the castles he had taken, but since he waited, Alessandro Sforza and Federigo of Urbino had time to reform their troops in front of him, and he found it expedient to return to the Abruzzi.

Thus the year came to an end, in uncertainty and foreboding. For Sigismondo could not but fear that when spring came, if it were in his power, the Pope would take vengeance for his broken promise and for that stronghold he had seized. Nor was he wrong: such vengeance as he could take he took speedily. The Cardinal di S. Pietro in Vincolis arraigned our Lord, truly in his absence, and notwithstanding this, and that he could not answer the charges brought against him, convicted him of Rebellion, of Heresy in matters of Faith, and I know not what else, the Pope excommunicating him, and declaring all his property confiscated by the Treasury, and all his lands by the Holy See. Then there was no time to be afraid; all he could do was to act. He sent Broglio to the Prince of Taranto, reminding him of his promises, and then prepared to take Sinigaglia. Now this city, already strongly garrisoned by the Pope, was then fortified with double walls on the weaker side, and indeed had been placed in such a state that it seemed impregnable. Moreover, when spring came we found the Pope had sent against us three thousand horse and two thousand foot under Ludovico Malvezzi and other captains, over whom was Bartolomeo, Bishop of Cornato, for Federigo of Urbino was still busy with the rebels in the neighbourhood of Rome. Although our forces, some thirteen hundred horse and five hundred foot, under Bernardo da Reggio, Cecco Brandolino, Simone Malaspina, Cola Coglione, Nicoletto da Canossa, Count Roberto di Monteverchio, Paolo da Viterbo, Petruccio da S. Arcangelo, Soardino da Barignano, and Roberto Malatesta, were manifestly inferior in number, Sigismondo determined to meet the Papal forces, and to

defeat them, or, in the attempt, to render up his life to God. Nor was the affair perhaps so desperate as it seemed, for a small number of experienced troops may easily overcome a horde of recruits such as composed the Papal army.

It was 29th July when Sigismondo called to him Panciuto degli Adimari, his secretary, and gave him the orders for the march and the attack: how the skirmishers were to go forward, how one fight was to follow another, and how the foot were to move in the battle. Then, having sent on his spies, our scouts too went forward, so that we might have news continually, and at last, two hours before dawn, we moved from Mondavio towards Castiglione de' Castracani which we reached at daybreak, and when the sun rose there lay the enemy not four miles away, his banners lazily waving in the sunrise, his whole camp astir, while now and then the faint call of a bugle reached us on the fresh morning air. We came to a halt, and the captains riding up, Sigismondo unfolded to them his plan of attack. He pointed out that the enemy was encamped loosely and without order, as though they had no fear of so small an army as ours; but, said he, pride ever goeth before a fall, and nothing is more natural than that a small army experienced in war, and taught as it were in the same school, should rout such a horde of untrained recruits. He was certain of winning, he said, if the Condottieri would but remember his orders, and would quickly help and relieve one another and fight with stubbornness, for nothing less than the total defeat of that rabble would content him. Nor was he without a favourable presage of the victory they were about to claim from God, for on the evening before an eagle had swept from the sky, and rested for a moment on his tent, as though to remind him of his ever-victorious ancestor, Scipio Africanus the Roman.

Thus he strengthened the courage of his men, then in the name of St George he ordered the advance. Riding



sometimes in advance, sometimes in the rear, he gave courage to all.

Now while Count Roberto di Monteverchio was to assail the camp on the one side, Sigismondo, on the other, led the skirmishers up to the barricades. It was at this moment that the alarm was given; everywhere we could see men mounting in haste; nor were our skirmishers in time to prevent the enemy advancing; but Sigismondo charging into the midst of the fray set no value on his life, but fought with enormous valour, like a lion robbed of his mate. And although at first we were driven back, yet other squadrons advanced, and, ever following Sigismondo, drove the Pope and his jackals behind their barricades.

Then our Lord bringing up the engines which we had brought, not without labour, so far on the backs of mules, rolled back the enemy till more than once our men gained the encampment; and there fell Paolo de' Nardini of the Papal army. All day thus went the fight, ebbing and flowing like a great sea; for their innumerable foot so sustained their horse that we could not shake them, and by evening we had all our men engaged, nor was there left to us a single man by way of reinforcement.

At last Sigismondo, holding his life for nothing, resolved to conquer or to die, sent Roberto, his son, with his own squadron and two hundred foot to enter the camp and destroy the tents. Then, bidding the trumpeters sound the charge continually, he took with him some four hundred horse and foot, and threw himself with incredible fierceness on the enemy's flank; so terrible was the onslaught that he burst through the barricades, and entered the camp. Then followed a most bloody contest, in which our Lord got him two wounds; yet they only served to inflame him the more, so that he had remained to fight at the barricades, seen by the enemy's cheers and shouting

and cries, entered the camp like a wave, overwhelming men and horses together in their way. Then we heard the shouting of those who, under Roberto, had fallen upon the tents: no more was needed, terror spread among the enemy, and by sunset we had put them to flight; and there remained in our hands the Pope's banner, and all the baggage and artillery, together with more than fifteen hundred horses.

XXIII

WHAT might have come of such a victory had Sigismondo thought only of his own safety I know not; perhaps honour and safety. But it was not to be. Impetuous, as he ever was, generous too, and as swift to help a friend as to leap on a foe, not long after he had beaten the Papal army and sent it flying back to its master, before we could make sure our position, Piccinino wanting help, begged our Lord to advance so far as Potenza, that he might unite his forces with ours, and march into the Kingdom. Certainly Sigismondo knew the risk he ran in leaving Romagna. Yet, remembering the Prince of Taranto, now in sorry case, for the Angevin cause was failing, he went with his troops to the appointed place, but found not Piccinino. After some days, returning in haste, knowing that he had put his whole dominion into jeopardy, he strove to come to terms with the Pope, asking only that Mondavio might remain to him. In vain; for the Pope's cause was prospering, and at that moment, remembering all things, as he said, not ten victories such as that we had now should save Sigismondo from his vengeance. And Federigo of Urbino waited for an opportunity to bring us low. But the Pope waited not. Unable to beat us in the field, all the armoury of his hate he brought out against our Lord, renewing in S. Pietro the excommunication, and having again charged him with rebellion against the Holy See, with heresy, with rape, with violation, with adultery, with incest, with parricide, with sacrilege, with felony and murder, he bade him come to Rome to be burned alive. Through all lands and seas he placed him under an interdict; those who

and cries, entered the camp like a wave, overwhelming men and horses together in their way. Then we heard the shouting of those who, under Roberto, had fallen upon the tents: no more was needed, terror spread among the enemy, and by sunset we had put them to flight; and there remained in our hands the Pope's banner, and all the baggage and artillery, together with more than fifteen hundred horses.

aided him were outlaws, the property of any who might sell them as slaves; those places which owed service or allegiance to him, and paid it, were excommunicated along with him.

Truly the Pope could not hope that Sigismondo would go to Rome to answer this charge and face his fury in his own city; therefore, since he could not burn Sigismondo, his hate demanding satisfaction, he caused images to be made in the likeness of our Lord, and these he burned, while out of their mouths issued this proclamation: "Sigismundus hic ego sum Malatesta, filius Pandulfi, rex proditorum, Deo atque hominibus infestus, sacri censura senatus igni damnatus." Many read these words and wondered, while the whole city of Rome gazed in joy, as at the burning of a demon, for they feared Sigismondo, who was a captain such as they had not the like.

Then the Pope, the lover of learning, the gentle scholar, the vicegerent of Christ, sitting at his window watching the bonfire, felt such joy thereat that he deceived himself, believing at last that it was indeed Sigismondo himself he saw in the flames.

Such was the barbarian who hid himself under the sleek if gouty body of Pius II., and such was the savage that lurked in the soul of one who passed as a lover of antiquity, as the Shepherd of the flock of Christ; such was the hypocrite, the reformed rake, the gossiping charlatan, who sat in the seat of Nicholas V. Truly he loved the Germans, and indeed he found their ways, I doubt not, pleasant and full of satisfaction. For though for no other cause, yet for this I call him savage, beast, barbarian, and fool, that, unable to glut his lust for blood and burnt flesh, like a savage, he caused an image to be made that what he had not in reality he might enjoy in his heart. Enough of him; let the world judge betwixt Sigismondo and this gouty swine, who has cringed and crawled for success, this reformed rake, this worn-out libertine who

enjoyed women till he was satiated and broken in health, and then crept into the Church, a battered whoremonger, and, by every filthy lane and obscure alley, arrived shameless in the place where his fat fingers might clutch the triple crown. He was a Sienese. Truly Dante has told us of them :

“ Or fù giammai
Gente sì vana com'è la Sanese ? ”

But Pius had not yet done with us. He declared all the citizens of our dominions free from all obligations to their Lord of fealty or homage; they were given five months in which to withdraw themselves from his government and to cease all relations with him; if any refused to do this he was threatened with perpetual slavery, and might be sold, both himself and his goods, by anyone, in any place.

Having thus raised up against him not only the whole of Italy, but his own subjects also, the Pope gave to Federigo of Urbino the general command of the Ecclesiastical troops for war against Sigismondo. And truly, when spring came we saw the storm that was about to burst upon us, but had no place of shelter, nor any means of protecting ourselves; for our treasury was empty, and the Pope at least had succeeded in frightening any soldier from joining us, since there seemed but little to gain and much to lose. It is true that Fortebraccio came to help us, leaving the Venetian service, but he was related to our Lord, while the Prince of Taranto, with much kindness, granted us 1600 ducats,¹ and Duke Borso lent us more, yet truly we could do but little; yet for all that we took Sinigaglia, almost with the good will of the enemy I have sometimes thought. For it was whispered that Sigismondo was about to depart for Abruzzo to aid his friends, who were the Pope's enemies, and by letting

¹ It seems that the money was lent really to gather an army to go to the assistance of the Prince, for the Angevins cause was in a bad way.

Sinigaglia fall into his hands they kept him busy in the north. Yet scarcely was Sinigaglia ours when Federigo appeared with all his army. Then Sigismondo, almost at his wits' end, turned to Federigo, and proposed to him peace and an alliance; for he told Urbino that the Pope would not be content with crushing the Malatesti, but would soon turn on the other vicars also, claiming all Umbria, Romagna, and the March for himself. But Federigo, as though he heard not, continued fighting. At last Sigismondo, taking counsel with his brother Novello, who, though sick and broken in health, remained with him, determined that it would be better to garrison Sinigaglia, which then could resist for a long time, and to lead the greater part of his army to Fano, that city by the sea, greatly fortified, and provided with every needful thing, according to the advice of the old Marchese Nicolò d'Este. This decision was indeed much applauded by all, the only difficulty being that of leaving Sinigaglia. This Sigismondo determined to do by night secretly. Yet this he could not do, for one of our scouts turned traitor, and told all the plan to Federigo, who, as soon as we set out, hung closely on our flanks. Yet at first we avoided a close fight, till we had crossed the river, when seeing that Federigo still pursued us, Sigismondo, changing his order of battle, altogether surrounded the enemy so that they must have surrendered had not Giovanni di Mantova perverted the written orders of our Lord, so that the fight was renewed in the plain, and though Sigismondo used all his skill, having lost the advantage through the treachery and stupidity of another we outnumbered, were utterly routed and scattered—Roberto, for instance, after fighting valiantly, and taking not a few of the enemy, shut himself up in Mondolfo, while Sigismondo, with the remnant of his broken army, gained Fano at last. There again I did my utmost to treat with Federigo, but he would scarce receive me much less listen to my words. All negotiations with

the Pope were in vain; of a truth, as was proved later, he desired our lordship for his own nephew. Divining this, Sigismondo called to him Roberto, his son, and reminding him that he had a lady of Fano for his mother, confided the government and safety of the city to him, being determined himself to set out by sea to seek aid from those powers he had so often served. Vain and Sienese though the Pope was, he would scarcely dare to offend a state such as Venice, for instance, who if properly approached would, as we thought, be very ready to defend us. Nevertheless, not wishing to escape the jaws of the fox only to fall into the power of the lion, Sigismondo first went into the Kingdom to see whether or not his friends there were able to help him. He arrived, however (such was our fortune), in time to weep with them over their common lot; for three days after his own defeat Prince Jean and Piccinino had been routed by the King Ferdinando, and Alessandro Sforza.

Nor were we in Fano any the better for his departure, but rather worse, for not only did the people grumble, fearing the evil the Pope might launch against them, but Federigo, in the absence of Sigismondo, had fallen upon the whole Contado of Rimini and of Fano, and had indeed brought up all his troops to besiege these cities. Among other places that fell was Montefiore, one of the stoutest in the dominion, yet it was given up by the keepers rather than conquered; and this place was defended by Giovanni, son of Sigismondo, under the direction of Soardino da Barignano. Now Federigo, whether from chivalry or from shrewdness I know not, treated Giovanni with all courtesy, setting him free at last, and giving him six mules laden with his baggage, and horses too he gave him, and other things convenient to him, bringing him himself into a place of safety. But when winter fell there remained to us in all the dominion but these five cities, Cervia, Cesena, Fano, Sinigaglia and Rimini, and of these there was

not one which had escaped battering. Then Federigo in quarters at Verrucchio took thought how he might possess himself of Rimini and Fano, and all that winter he besieged them closely. Yet in Fano we still kept up our hearts, and the soldiers, as though in scorn of our misfortunes, even made a triumph in which an image of the Pope adorned with peacock's feathers was dragged through the streets in a disgraceful manner.

But spring was coming, and with it our almost certain ruin. Was it possible to prevent it? How often we debated that question. At last leaving Roberto and Giovanni to defend Fano, while Madonna Isotta with her son Salustio held Rimini, Sigismondo set out again begging for help. He went first to Venice, and indeed at the end of his journeys the Venetians alone promised him assistance, for they cared not to see the Pope so strong near their dominion, and for this reason had, much to the Pope's anger, bought Cervia from us in the previous autumn. They promised us help, but in vain; yet Rimini was saved from the hands of the Piccolomini by reason of the plague that fell upon us in the spring; and for this cause Federigo went with his army to join the troops before Fano, taking some castles on his way, among them Macerata and Certaldo, which still held for Sigismondo in Montefeltro, together with others in the contado of Fano, which in the winter had returned to the allegiance of our Lord.

Now, as I have said, Sigismondo, urged thereto both by Madonna Isotta and by Madonna Vanetta, had given Fano into the care of Roberto, thinking too that, since he was born there, his son would better engage the loyalty of the citizens than himself. It was June when Federigo came into the field against the city, encamping near the Badia of S. Patrignano. The great fight had begun. At first, it is true, Roberto proved more than a match for him, for he not only prevented him from

placing his batteries against the city, but also continually sent out skirmishers to worry the Papal camp, himself gaining much advantage, since by sea both reinforcements and supplies reached him from Rimini. The Pope, however, thinking to prevent this, armed a ship in Ancona, and sent it towards Fano. And, as it happened, there were then some barges just come into port from Rimini; these the Pope's ship easily took, for they were heavy with cargo, and slow. At that moment, as it happened, two Venetian galleys hove into sight, and made straight for our barges, so that the Pope's ship withdrew. Then the Venetians brought our boats into port, and urged Roberto to make every defence in his power, assuring him that the Republic would not stand idle while its friends were bullied by the Church.

For many days these Venetian ships hung about the port, while the Pope's galley waited too, not daring to approach. Then the Pope threatened to complain to the Senate, and indeed did so; but the Venetians answered that they were guardians of those seas, and had no other desire than that traders should be free from the attacks of corsairs.

In the meantime Roberto had struck one good blow for freedom, for gathering the best of his men and the most experienced, he sallied out of the city, and charging straight for the batteries tried to capture them, or at least to render them useless. And though he was not altogether successful he caused such fear and confusion in the Papal army that a little later, seeing twenty-five barges full of provisions and supplies enter the port, all save Federigo, whose hate was unappeased, wished to abandon the siege as useless.

Federigo, however, had sworn to take the city, and though winter was coming on, and he had gained nothing, he was neither disheartened nor afraid. On the other hand, while our soldiers were eager to continue the defence, the principal citizens, remembering the Pope's briefs, were anxious above all

to save themselves, so that when, after all had been done that could be done, Federigo still continued the bombardment, and managed to destroy a great tower, a general terror spread through the city, and some of the principal citizens, fearing a worse thing, presented themselves to Roberto, and urged him to surrender, on honourable terms. Seeing their plight, and that no promise of reinforcements could hearten them, he gave them leave to do what they would, shutting himself with his mother and his sisters into the citadel near the port, trusting that he might get help from sea.

Then the gates were opened, and on 15th September the Papal troops entered Fano under the standard of the Church.

Now the citizens loved Roberto for he was a brave man, and though they had given up the city they had won his freedom with their own from the Legate. Therefore when at last overcome by the tears of the women, Roberto delivered the citadel also to Federigo he found himself safe; moreover, his splendid defence of four months had filled all mouths with his glory so that he was greeted rather as a conqueror than as a defeated general. And Federigo honourably received him, and praised him before all his Condottieri; then, accompanying him aboard ship, he sent him to Rimini to his father. And it was said that he promised, when that war should be ended, he would not fail to give Roberto every proof of the respect he had won from him.

XXIV

OF all the territory of the Malatesti there remained to them only Rimini and Cesena. And indeed such was our condition that, at all costs, we must make peace. Truly for a long time, ever since the fall of Sinigaglia, and his defeat on the road to Fano, our Lord, by the mouth of Messer Giammarino de Giammarini of Cesena and others, had offered to make his submission to the Pope, and not only the Venetians, but the Duke of Milan and Cosimo de' Medici, had also been asked to intervene on our behalf; in vain, for the Pope was more anxious to rob us of our dominion than to accept our submission or to be friends.

Nevertheless, two days after the fall of Fano, Messer Giammarino, with new powers, went to throw himself at the Pope's feet, asking, in Sigismondo's name, for pardon for every crime against the Holy See, beseeching peace on any terms that pleased His Holiness, for our power was broken. Nor were we without powerful advocates, for Venice, no longer indifferent as to our fate, had no wish to see Rimini and Cesena go the way of Fano, Sinigaglia, and Gradara; nor was Duke Francesco willing to see the Romagna pass altogether into the power of the Pope, since Alessandro Sforza held Pesaro, and, moreover, the envoys of the King of France were at that time in Rome arranging peace between Ferdinando and the Angevins, and hoping thus in some way to save their own honour, they insisted upon including Sigismondo in the pacification, and the envoys of Florence supported them in this. Nevertheless, the Pope was hard to move, for he looked upon our territory

as a heritage for his nephews, or if not for his nephews, as so much saved from Venice for the Church. Wishing therefore to put off the decision of this affair, and anxious to see Christendom, or at any rate Italy, united against the Turk, when the Venetian envoys pressed him about Sigismondo he turned upon them, and urged that they should cease to make war upon Trieste, and join at once the other Christian nations in war against the enemy of God. But they would not have it so, answering that they were ready to do as he wished, but they waited his example; for having, robbed the Malatesti of their lands, he still continued the war, refusing to them not only their dominion, but even their peace. The Pope, thus forced into a corner, and angered that the whole of Christendom should see his greed, sent Cardinal Bessarion to Venice to urge the Senate to agree to a general action against the Turk; the Venetians, on their part, sent Bernardo Guistiniano to the Pope, urging him to cease to bully the Malatesti; and all the envoys, as I have said, making common cause with him, Pius II. was compelled, against his will, to offer us terms. Yet first, to satisfy his pride, he insisted upon our submission. Therefore, on 4th October, Signor Novello went to the Legate in Romagna, Cardinal di Tienò, and humbly begged pardon for all the sins of the family. Nor even yet was the Pope satisfied, for not only did Messer Sagramori, one of our Lord's secretaries, abjure and renounce on his behalf, the crimes of heresy and such named in the charge against him, but Messer Giovanni Andigio, another secretary, was compelled to go to S. Pietro, where he solemnly repeated this abjuration before the Archbishop of Benevento.

Then and not till then did we have peace, the terms of which were certainly more humiliating than those pilgrimages forced upon us by the Pope.

"Or fù giammai
Gente sì vana com' è la Sanese."

For Sigismondo was compelled to place in the hands of the Pope all the lands formerly in his dominion. On the other hand, it was promised that Rimini itself, with the estates of Bargellato Riminese and the Castle of Cerasolo, should remain to him as vicar, and should descend to his legitimate or bastard sons for the annual tribute of one thousand gold florins. Again, Novello was also to resign all his lordship into the Pope's hands, but was allowed to choose any one castle, and to be invested with the lordship of it, which was to descend to his heirs. But the city of Cesena, which he retained, would, if he died without legitimate male issue (and his health was so bad that this seemed immediately likely), relapse to the Holy See.¹ This last clause in the treaty did not altogether please the Venetians, who, having already acquired Cervia, feared that when the Pope had possessed himself of Cesena he would long for that city also.² The Pope, however, was not yet prepared to quarrel with Venice, upon whom depended the success of his expedition against


¹ The distribution of Sigismondo's dominion was as follows:—The vicariate of S. Agata, with all its castles, Penna Billi, Maiolo, S. Leo Macerata, Sasso, Pietrarubbia, Tavoletto, the Auditorio, Valle Avellana, Pian di Castello, Rupietrosa Ripa Massana, with all castles in Montefeltro, was granted to Federigo of Urbino for three legitimate generations, for annual tribute to the Holy See of 1340 gold florins. Talamello was given to Gian Francesco di Bagno, who had conquered it. To Count Alessandro Sforza of Pesaro was granted the castle of Gradara and its territory. King Ferdinando had given fifty thousand gold florins, which he was to have had from Sigismondo, to Antonio Piccolomini, his son-in-law, the Pope's nephew, who was invested with the vicariate of Sinigaglia, with its contado, Mondavio, S. Costanza, Montecchio, Mondolfo, Monte Marciano, and so forth. If he died without legitimate issue, Giacomo and Andrea Piccolomini and their sons and grandsons were to succeed him. The Republic of S. Marino too gained certain small places and privileges. Other soldiers of the Pope gained other small castles and privileges. See Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. pp. 531-532.

² There was some arrangement between the Venetians and the Duke of Modena, whereby the Republic supplied the Duke with salt from Cervia. It will be remembered that once before, in the time of Eugenius IV., Sigismondo had fortified Cervia to protect this industry.

the Turks. Thinking thus to assure them of his good faith in this peace, and in the subtle and sly hope of getting Sigismondo out of Romagna, he suggested to them that our Lord should be appointed Captain-General of their troops in this Crusade.

Ah! how can I ever describe the misery of that winter? Long and long ago all the poets, painters, sculptors, architects, clowns, buffoons, astrologers, and such had departed; yet there remained with us Messer Basinio Basini, busy with the fame of Sigismondo; Messer Valturio, and Messer Matteo da Pasti too, a little company, but a loyal, who loved Sigismondo.

What to do? for truly we were beggared. Yet among all those who wept and saw no help, two never lost either courage or hope— I mean Sigismondo himself and Madonna Isotta. And indeed her courage was all our hope. Beautiful and full of silence, her steadfast eyes seemed to hold in their strange untroubled depths the mysterious promise of the future. In her hands she held the soul of our Lord. Would she let it fall? Not she. “Agree with the Venetians,” said she, “they are our friends. When you return full of your victories, your glory a star in Christendom, your fame like a trumpet resounding on the hills, will the Pope dare to say you nay? I know the Sienese; they can do everything in a moment, but they cannot persist. Will the nephews of Piccolomini dare to stand against the saviour of Europe? Will the Pope dare to oppose him who has saved the triple crown? Will the Church deny anything to him who has avenged God upon his enemies? Go to, gather in your victories. Pius will be rotten in Siena when your fame is green. Be of good heart, you have lost to-day what you shall win back a hundredfold to-morrow. Crowned with the eternal glory of the liberation of Hellas you will return. Be sure, in life the




victory is ever with him who can persist." Truly her courage lifted up the heart. It was marvellous, a thing to wonder at, more extraordinary than her strange beauty. For her at least if our Lord fell there was no future, nor for her son Salustio neither. Roberto, already friends with Federigo, certainly thought to claim Rimini, and, Sigismondo away, what hope was left to her of heritage for her son?

Yet for all her courage, Sigismondo remained like a stricken man, already defeated in his heart. He roused himself at last to send Anastagi and Alberto Petrucci of Mondavio as his commissioners to Venice to arrange for the engagement of Roberto in the service of the Republic; and then in March, full of new hope, of the promises of Madonna Isotta he went himself thither, taking me with him, for I longed to see once more before I died the holy land of Hellas.

How may I describe the glory and magnificence that awaited him, when before the whole city, in the Piazza di S. Marco, after the solemn ceremony of consecration in the Cathedral, the standard of the Republic and the baton of command were given him, and he was presented to the city. All Italy applauded the man whom all Italy had conspired to subdue, but was now compelled to place at the head of the army to overcome the infidel. Truly on that Spring morning, the whole city full of the sea-wind, seemed like an immense garland flung at the feet of the hero.

Who shall find out the hearts of men? It was not after all in security and honour that Sigismondo was to set out on that high emprise, but in anxiety and grief, owing to the cunning wickedness of Pius II. For in April, just before we sailed, news reached us that the Pope was plotting, with certain enemies of ours, Raniero de' Maschi and Ramberto Fulcerio, to seize the city as soon as we were safely away. Now Madonna Isotta, in the wisdom of Sigismondo, had been given all power in Rimini, yet owing to our poverty, no



less than to the treaty which stripped us of soldiers, there were but few men left to guard her, for indeed we thought we had the guarantee of the Church that Rimini should be safe.

When this new plot came to Sigismondo's ears, without waiting a moment, he appealed to the Republic to guard Rimini in his absence. Pleased with his confidence, the Senate at once sent two hundred foot, at their own expense, to hold the city, and bade us be at peace, telling us that, if the Pope sought to harm us, he must not only fight Venice, but give up all his dreams of a crusade, thus shaming himself in the eyes of the world.

No long time after, almost at peace in our hearts, we set out. I shall not weary you with much news of that unfortunate campaign; for unfortunate it was, disaster following on disaster, and through no fault of Sigismondo's, who bore himself, as ever, valiantly.

When we first came into Morea we found the army, which we had hoped would be very strong, to number but seven thousand men, so that, even as hitherto, it had not been able to prevent the Turks from invading that part of the Peloponnesus held by the Republic, so now it would be necessary rather to defend than to attack, and to wait for those crusaders the Pope had assembled at Ancona, and who, before our departure, had overrun Venice, without money and without arms, awaiting free passage, much to the amusement of the Venetians. Then we heard that the Pope himself was coming, hoping, as Sigismondo said, for spoil, or to convert Mahomet to Christianity by his eloquence, as he had already tried to do by his letters. Then news came that the Doge had himself sailed, with six galleys, for Ancona, to join the Pope. After that, for a long time, there was silence. At last, one autumn day, we heard strange news indeed: that the Pope was dead in Ancona, and that the Crusade was

suspended until another Pope should sanction it. Then one day letters came to us from Rimini, by which we learned that Pius had made use of the money collected throughout Europe for the Crusade to defeat us in Romagna, that the new Pope, Paul II., Cardinal Barbo, was unable, or at any rate unwilling, to continue the campaign. This last news found us in a strange and desolate place. For we, at least, had lost no time, but, when Sigismondo had taken over the command, had, little by little, retaken the whole of the Marina, and at last had decided to besiege Mistra, where, as we thought, the Divine philosopher, Gemisthus Pletho, was held in captivity. And indeed during all the campaign we thought and spoke of little else but him. In that strange and windy place among the mountains . . .

(Here the MS. is defective.)

At last, after infinite pains and privations, we took the city, nor was Sigismondo the last to enter it; yet we found not Gemisthus, but since the castle held out still against us we feared for his very life among such barbarians, and night and day we searched where to find him. Then one day as I walked through the fields full of unreaped and trampled corn without the city, seeking both among the dead, who lay by the wayside, and among the wounded and fugitives, for him who held in his heart the very secret of the world, I found an old man who, having lost his little son, and sought him in vain for many days, was running aimlessly among the trodden corn calling his name. Him I seized gently by the arm thinking to console him, for I could not pass him by. Almost naked as he was, he was a Greek of good birth. Speaking then of many things to take his thoughts from his child, whom certainly he would never see again, I spoke of Gemisthus and of our search, that also was in vain.

"You speak of the Philosopher," said he.

"Who else?" said I. "Whom else should I seek in this place—I, an old man, and without family and friends?"

"He is dead," said the Greek. "He died some years since. Yonder is his grave." And he led me to the place.

That night, secretly for fear of the people, Sigismondo and myself, with some few trusted ones, came to the rude tomb, already spoiled by war, and gently gathered his ashes into a gold cup. With this hidden under the cloak of our Lord we returned to the camp.

Not a moment too soon had we found Gemisthus, for on that night came news of the approach of the Infidels with an army of some 25,000 men. Already reinforcements had been introduced into the citadel, and our army was restive and mutinous by reason of the hardships and terrors of the campaign, so that many captains had already abandoned their posts. When these were brought in before him, Sigismondo wished to punish them, but Dandolo Provveditore of the Republic would not consent, and thus such dissensions arose that no one was in agreement with another save that the siege should be abandoned. Then, ravaging the country as he went, our Lord led us into winter quarters at Napoli in Roumenia. There the pestilence fell upon us, so that at last a shattered host we passed into Laconia; in vain as it proved, for we lost half our men, so that at last, coming to Mantinea, we were but two thousand eight hundred strong.

Nor were our troubles finished yet. For there in that inhospitable and stony place Sigismondo fell so ill that for two days we took him for dead. How shall I ever forget the horror of those weeks when I watched beside him, helpless and raving, in the midst of a mutinous army, distracted not only by the enemy without, but by secret foes within our camp. Only

the precious dust of Gemisthus never left his pillow, and indeed I think it was the thought he had conceived of placing this in the Temple at Rimini that at last revived him so that he was cured of his sickness. Yet all this time our host was dwindling from pestilence; and then to crown all our troubles news came that Roberto, urged thereto by the Pope as we thought, and as was generally asserted, had seized Rimini. You may imagine Sigismondo's rage and anxiety and fear. "What of Isotta?" Ah! how often I heard that question when the only answer I could give to a man but half returned from death was: "Who knows?" Then at last came letters from Isotta herself, brought from Venice at the risk of death. It seemed that Roberto had indeed appeared in Rimini, and in mourning too, but when he had tried to seize the city¹ the garrison of the Republic had prevented it. Yet the news was not all good, for we learned that Novello was sick unto death and had shut himself up in the citadel to die, having no means of defence, for already Federigo was in arms as the Pope's general, ready to seize Cesena. Another letter told of the death of Novello, and then how Roberto, disappointed in Rimini, had held the citadel and bargained it with the Pope and Federigo, whose favour he had, for Meldola and other places formerly in the power of Sigismondo. Then our Lord, seeing his army already defeated by disease and like to be destroyed altogether, sent to Venice demanding either reinforcements or permission to return home, for he feared Venice amid these changes might see fit to seize Rimini to save it from the Pope, and he feared the Pope for a similar reason, and above all he feared what his own son might do, for all things seemed to him possible while he was so far away. And in his heart he wondered what he might do there in Romagna now that Pius was dead. The Republic was loth to let him go, but at last consented if he would

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. p. 538, says by the suggestion of the Pope.

that Messer Leon Battista had built under the arches that surround the Temple, carving on the marble this inscription in antique letters :

ITEMISTIL. BYZANTIL. PHILOSOPHI. SUA. TEMP.
 PRINCIPIS. RELIQUUM.
 SIGISMUNDUS. PANDULFUS. MAL. PAN. F. BELLI.
 PELOP. ADVERSUS. TURCOR.
 REGEM. IMP. OB. INGENTEM. ERUDITORUM. QUO.
 FLAGRAT. AMOREM.
 HUC AFFERENDUM INTROQUE. MITTEDUM CURAVIT.
 MCCCCLXV.

Now the Pope Paul II. was glad of Sigismondo's return, for he feared the Venetians might have seized Rimini in his absence, nor was he without hope, as it proved, to benefit himself by Sigismondo's presence.

But Sigismondo dreamed only of his lost dominion. Thinking therefore to flatter him (though at the time we guessed it not) hoping against hope for the return of his Lordship, and knowing the love of glory and honour which possessed our Lord, he bade him come to Rome in May 1466, there to receive the Rose of blessed gold in reward for his fatigue and risks in the Morea in the war he led against the infidels. How can I describe the magnificence with which he was received in Rome, the noble gifts, the splendid triumph in which he was conducted from the Pope's palace to his lodging, followed by all the Cardinals and Prelates of the Court, the glory and the trumpets? It seemed on that spring day that the ancient and eternal City had roused her dead to greet him; that the melancholy, noble, and secret streets had thrown wide their doors that the people might do him homage; that from the throats of the altar-princes he might hear without

might rise to welcome him among his ancestors, Scipio Africanas and the rest, who had flung back the barbarians, the enemies of the Latin people.

Thus he rode as a hero through the city in which his image had been burned. Too short, too short was that brief triumph, passing as the passing of the day into the night, that has lost the sun, and is splendid only with the shadow of his glory.

Was it indeed as a welcome from the illustrious dead that I had seemed to hear the ancient heroes greet my Lord? Was it in truth really as a splendid procession leading him towards immortal life under the triumphal arch of the grave that they had gathered about him on that spring day and led him through the ancient city?

Who knows what mysterious honours are given to him who has built up a Temple to the Omnipotent God, and in linked sweetness has bound together the joy of Apollo and the tears of Jesus! Who knows what may be in store for him who has thought to reconcile the love of Madonna, whose son was Love, and the love of Aphrodite whose son was Love also? And he who has held in his hands and hidden under his pillow the dust of the last disciple of Plato is already more than a man, and has tasted the ambrosia of the immortal Gods that on Zion and Olympus rule and order the world, and influence and inform the hearts of men.

Ah! was that Triumph indeed a shout of welcome torn from the throats of the dead who knew for once a brother? Who knows?

For even on the very eve of this triumph, in heaven his death was signed.

Before we left the everlasting City the Pope sent for us, and spoke very earnestly to us of the danger that threatened us from Venice, so that Sigismondo was persuaded, no long

time after to beg the Republic to allow him to recall his own troops and to dismiss theirs. And they gave him leave.

When this was accomplished, still hoping, as he ever did, to regain his lordship rather by good will than by force, he told the Pope what he had done, who bade him come again to Rome. Nothing doubting that indeed at last he was about to receive back his dominions, in part at least, he went thither hastily to throw himself at the feet of His Holiness, who, instead of returning him his lordship, hinted that while he was yet alive he should cede Rimini to the Church.

Shall I ever forget that day when I, waiting my Lord in the ante-room, saw him return to me as pale as a dead man, his face like marble stone? Surely it was then that the first herald came to us from the ghostly kingdom warning him to depart. In haste we sent to Rimini, bidding Isotta guard herself, bidding her send to Venice for the old garrison for we had no troops of our own. And she, worthy alone of our Lord, pawned her jewels and all the beautiful things of happiness for ten thousand ducats, called Salustio from Ferrara, and placed herself on guard.¹

Indeed from this time Sigismondo left all the cares of Government in the wise, unhasty hands of Madonna Isotta, himself looking where he might find employment for his sons, which truly was all that was left him.

I can never forget these long, weary, anxious days of poverty and feverish distress, in which my Lord sat silent for hours in the Rocca, listlessly turning the pages of Petrarch or eagerly planning how he might complete the Temple or persuade the Pope to render him his dominion.

But the Pope had set his heart on Rimini. In this

¹ Battaglini, *op. cit.* ii. 541, suggests that Isotta had an understanding with Venice that Salustio was to succeed Sigismondo instead of Roberto, the Pope's protégé.

cause he sent to us the Lord of Camerino, to whom he promised certain castles if he could persuade Sigismondo to give Rimini spontaneously to the Church, and in return he was to offer us the Vicariate of Foligno and Spoleto, which, as he said, were richer than our own.

It was a summer morning when the Lord of Camerino came on this embassy; yet for all the sun was shining my heart was full of foreboding. What indeed could the Pope want with us, save to ask of us our all. I was roused from these gloomy thoughts in the ante-room where I was waiting by the joyful glad voice of Sigismondo.

"Piero, Piero, come here; here is news indeed!" It seemed to me then that it was the voice of a young man I heard.

"Where is Isotta? Where is Madonna?" he asked as I entered. "See, Piero, my friend, here is Varani from the Pope with the offer of Foligno and Spoleto. Surely we will requite the kindness of His Holiness with most excellent services. Ah! speak to him, my Piero, while I bring Madonna."

"A moment, a moment," said Varani deprecatingly. "Hear me out, Signore, and you, Messer Piero, hear me out, I say."

"What need to hear more, caro Signore? you have given us the best news we have heard for many a day. Talk to him, Piero, while I tell Madonna."

"Listen, I beg of you, Signore," Varani continued, truly with tears in his eyes. "My work has been done vilely; truly I shall not hope to excuse myself. Listen," he went on gravely, almost beseechingly. "It is not altogether as a free gift that these cities are offered."

"Not altogether as a free gift?"

"Not altogether as a free gift, not altogether."

"His Holiness requires some service of us, some tribute"

Of course, it shall be paid. Tell Piero of it; I must bring Madonna."

"Signor Sigismondo, I beseech you to hear me out. You have most grievously misunderstood me. I fear me much that, through my bungling, this embassy is like to prove of no account. To be brief, His Holiness offers you Foligno and Spoleto in exchange for this your city of Rimini."

"In exchange for Rimini?" said Sigismondo, deathly pale at last, coming towards me, and putting his arm on my shoulder. Just then Madonna Isotta came in and he went towards her, and took her by the hand. "In exchange for Rimini?" he said again half to himself.

"Even so," said Varani, turning away.

There was silence for a long time. Then Sigismondo still as pale as death, began to murmur his thanks. It was horrible to hear. He thanked His Holiness for this signal honour, and especially that he had chosen Varani, his son-in-law, to be his messenger. Then murmuring still, but scarcely able to contain himself, he said that he had not expected such honour; that truly there could be but one answer to such an offer; that he would not speak of that now, for he wished to be at the feet of His Holiness to show his thanks.

Then scarcely knowing what he did, he bade Varani farewell. As I came out, for he waved me away also, I found Broglio in the ante-chamber scarcely less pale than our Lord.

"This then is the end," said Broglio.

When I saw Sigismondo some hours later, I saw that Broglio was right. He was striding up and down the room talking eagerly to himself. Madonna lay in a chair weeping and watching him. "He has mocked me, he has mocked me; I will kill him," he muttered continually, then bunching the fingers of his left hand he would grip them with his

right, as he strode about muttering, laughing, and gesticulating. When I tried to rouse him out of this dull rage he bade me begone; then as suddenly calling me to him he kissed me, and told me to order horses for him, Broglio, three guards, and myself. "We shall go to Rome," he said, and when Madonna Isotta protested and begged him to send me alone, "We shall go to Rome."

We started at dawn.

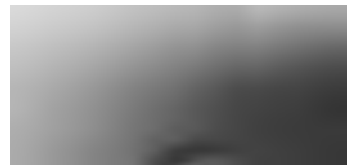
Of that hasty journey I have little to relate. We rode silently for the most part, and in haste. If we stayed, as we were forced to do, for rest, food, and sleep, Sigismondo knew not food nor rest, but continually strode up and down in his room or by the wayside. He could not be at peace. In a few days his face was a havoc—the battle in his heart had destroyed in it everything but hatred. Yet it was not till the very evening on which we entered Rome that I was afraid. It was just as we came in sight of the city, beautiful in the evening light. I was riding beside him. Suddenly, from under the black velvet of his cloak, he drew a naked dagger, and, putting it to his lips, he kissed it, saying to himself, as though confirming a vow, and oblivious of my presence: "I shall kill him."

That night, in Rome, as I know, he closed not his eyes in sleep, but sat at his window looking over the city.

On the next day we went to the palace. Truly we were not expected, yet we were admitted without surprise. As we went in our Lord gave us one order: "Do not, in any event, abandon the door of the ante-chamber."

There we waited for a long time, till one came and told us that the Pope could not receive our Lord that day. Then I breathed again, for I knew the plan was hopeless.

But Sigismondo would not let it be. More dead than



alive, he returned to our lodging. Again he remained standing all night at the window waiting. He seemed to count the minutes.

In the morning again we went to find the Pope. This time we were certainly expected; we were received with ceremony. Then at last the great door was thrown open and Sigismondo was admitted. The Pope received him in full conclave. He strode into the midst of the room, straight towards the Pope; for a moment he stood motionless, then he realised his helplessness, and already I had seen the glint of swords under the scarlet of the Cardinals. Half turning on his heel, as though to escape, he swayed slightly, and then, just as I was about to rush to save him (but Broglio seized me by the arm), he pulled out his dagger and flung it at the Pope's feet, falling on his knees.

What he said I know not, nor does it matter what the Pope replied.

After a time we found ourselves in the narrow streets of Rome seeking our lodging. . . .

Then we started for Rimini. It seems that the Pope, seeing he would never obtain Rimini willingly from Sigismondo, and afraid to take it by force, had confirmed him in the possession of it. What was this confirmation worth? Nothing, as Sigismondo knew. Yet he seemed to be comforted.

But the strain of that week of anguish, the terrible rage, anger, and fever of murder that had torn his heart, was too much for him; after the illness he had suffered in Morea, his body and his spirit could not bear this new blow. On the way home he fell sick and was already dying. In Rimini he lay ill for many days. Yet he recovered, only an immense weariness seemed to have overwhelmed him; for some time he led a few men for His Holiness in the Kingdom; but he was a dying man, and he knew it. So when winter came he

returned to Rimini, to Madonna Isotta, really, as he told us, to die.

All his thought now was for these three things: the future of Isotta, the succession of Salustio, and the completion of his Temple. All that he could do he did, but Death would not be denied. All his life he had struggled for his dominion, and so it is not surprising that his last thoughts were concerned with it. In early summer he grew worse, yet every day he fought for life, for he feared what might befall when he was dead.

And at last, on 7th October 1468, holding my hand, for of a truth we loved one another, he breathed his last in the arms of Isotta.

XXVI

(From Another Hand)

AMONG the books and manuscripts in this Villa of Signor Lorenzo's, no long time since I happened upon this bundle of papers, which I have read at last. It seems to me it contains nothing of any great importance—nothing, that is, which is not known already, and this certainly gains nothing in freshness or interest from the rambling method of old Sanseverino.

As for him, he came to Florence on the death of Madonna Isotta; and our Lorenzo, with his usual prodigality, took him into his house. I believe he was supposed to read Greek with the children of his Magnificence, but I think they were rather his *buffoncelli*, that, instead of instructing them, he treated them as companions, and since they had excellent voices, and the old scholar was fond of music, he took great delight in hearing them sing, and play on various instruments; often indeed I have heard them thus at work in the gardens.

However this may be, it was among them that he died, not long ago. For one evening, just before Ave Maria, our Lorenzo, with Poliziano, Pico della Mirandola, some few ladies, and myself, came upon them all, sleeping, as we thought, under the olives stirring in the evening breeze. The youngest child lay in his arms, his curls scattered over the old man's breast; the two elder held each a hand, and Madonnina had her head on his knees. Thus they lay. But when we went to awaken them we found the old man

dead—death having found him as he said his astrologer told him it would do, “hand-in-hand with youth.” Lorenzo was somewhat disturbed at this strange thing, wondering what it might mean; but Pico bade Poliziano lead the children away, and then having kissed the old man, lifted him in his arms, and bore him to the Villa, for he loved him. He was buried at dawn.

Certainly Sanseverino must have led a curiously uncertain life, full of change and adventure. His manuscript, which he says is modelled on the work of Marcus Aurelius, is not in the smallest degree like the work of the stoic Emperor. It is an artless chronicle of the wars of Sigismondo Malatesta. His estimate of that Lord is too high, his judgment too favourable. Yet I can well believe that Sigismondo caught a man’s love, and especially the devotion of one so simple as this old scholar. Pico said of him that his chief characteristic was innocency of heart. Certainly the corrupt Lord of Rimini seems to have passed him by scatheless. I have heard that in his youth he loved Isotta before Sigismondo looked on her; but of this his papers give no hint, unless indeed the fact that he ends with her name may be said to mean anything; but as his manuscript is obviously unfinished this goes for nothing.

Since reading his Chronicle I have thought it best to inquire concerning Madonna Isotta and what happened in Rimini on Sigismondo’s death. The result of my curiosity I shall set down here as briefly as I may.

Sigismondo, as he had desired, was succeeded by Isotta who held Rimini for her son Salustio; not without fear, as it proved, for Roberto was, as Sanseverino records, already friends with Urbino and the Pope. It was not long before he set out to win the city, for himself, as it proved—for the Church, as he said. Once within the walls he first befriended Isotta, finding her too strong in the affections of the crowd

for him to oppose her openly. For this wise forbearance, however, he lost the Pope's love, though Federigo of Urbino understood his game and remained his friend, even betrothing his daughter to him.

Paul II., however, soon came to die, and was succeeded by that traitor, della Rovere Sixtus IV., who was the friend of all conspirators.

How it happened no one is sure (though, knowing the race, we may guess the manner easily enough), but on 8th August 1470 Salustio was found dead in a well belonging to the Marcheselli in Rimini. Some suspicion attached for a time to this family, for a bloody sword was found near their house, not far away; but no man really believed the murderer to be other than Roberto, for within the year Isotta died also, inexplicably, of a slow fever as it was said, but of poison as was believed—Valerio, her second son, being openly slain by Roberto not long after.

Of the career of Roberto I say nothing, for many and obvious reasons; nor should I have added aught to Sanseverino's manuscript, but that some curious reader, a stranger perhaps, or one not yet born, may desire to know the fate of the "divine Isotta."

Thus it befell; and now Sanseverino also is departed. Certainly God owed a peaceful death to this old man, whose claims on my notice are that our Lorenzo befriended him and Pico of Mirandola loved him well; though I confess I ever found him as full of dreams as Madonna Giulia is full of songs. I say no more, for here she cometh singing.

NOTE

The friendly reader—and I am reluctant to remember any other—will perhaps pardon a word of explanation as to the intention of this book. For the vision was so splendid, and now that the book is finished I fear lest I have fallen so far short of it that those who read, hurriedly at any rate, will not see what I have seen. A great love of Italy (and again the reader must pardon me if I venture to bring myself into the argument, for all that is best in me is hers who gave me sight and with whom I first saw the sun) is perhaps able to blind us to the futility and uselessness of those petty wars which, materially at any rate, go to make up the history of her Quattrocento. How ineffectual they are, how dull! it might seem to be scarcely worth any one's while to recount the ebb and flow of a campaign in a place so unimportant, so far away, as the Marche or Romagna, where victor and vanquished are both really of very little account, where no war ever seems really to end or to have any result whatever. Yet I think, indeed, any true lover of that, our second Fatherland, cannot but be moved by every agony through which she passed while she gave us light and life and all those precious things which we hold dearer to-day perhaps than ever before, since their worth is beginning to be questioned. But indeed she who was ever the head and front of the world, who taught all our poets to sing, even from Chaucer to Swinburne, and who, after countless and splendid battles, raised again her standard in the most glorious and immortal struggle of our own time, needs no excuse. It is my book, that may be, I must explain. It is an experiment. I had set myself to write fact as fiction. I had wished to give an impression of the first part of the fifteenth century without using a single incident that was not authenticated: to write the life of one of those Tyrants who, without morality, without honour, without purity, or justice, yet in some sort did us signal service in a way no one else perhaps could have done. It would have been easy for a scholar, an historian like Creighton, or Von Reumont, or Burckhardt to write a monograph on Sigismondo, full of information and knowledge; and indeed Monsieur Yriarte has done something of this sort in his "Un Condottiere au XV^{ème} Siècle," to which I am indebted, especially